CÆDMON

THE FIRST ENGLISH POET

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CÆDMON

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CÆDMON

THE FIRST ENGLISH POET

BY

ROBERT SPENCE WATSON

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1875

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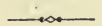
PREFACE.



This attempt to make the life and works of the First English Poet more widely known springs from the interest taken in the subject by an English Language and Literature Class of Men and Women which I conducted for some years at the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Lecturing upon 'Cædmon' afterwards to the members of the Society, I found that the idea of an English Literature prior to Chaucer was new to many of my hearers. It is not creditable to us that we should know so little about the Founders of our Literature. I am conscious of the imperfections of my work, which has had to be completed in the rare and brief intervals of a busy professional life. I trust, however, that the interest of the subject will atone in some measure for the

inability of the writer. I wish to express my warm acknowledgments to the men who have preceded me in this matter, and to none more than to Professor Henry Morley, of University College, London.

Moss Croft, Gateshead-on-Tyne:
October 9, 1875.

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CÆDMON AND HIS WORKS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Before I proceed to speak of Cædmon and his Works, I shall endeavour briefly to explain the position of that portion of the world which specially interests us Western peoples during the period of his life,—the seventh century. I shall speak first of the political situation, and shall then show the intellectual condition of the then existing nations, in order that we may more truly estimate the precise place which the Father of English Poetry holds in general literary history.

The old Roman Empire had fallen before the repeated attacks of the barbarians. By the middle of the fifth century the Western Empire had ceased to exist. It had long been moribund. The true Roman people had steadily decreased in numbers.

Marriage had become so exceedingly distasteful to them that it could not be otherwise. Loving ease and comfort, they dreaded the trouble of bringing up large families. They were rich and selfish. The very opposite of the Irishmen of to-day, they remind us forcibly of the modern Frenchmen. The Roman armies, which had to contend with the barbarian invaders of Italy, were themselves composed of barbarians; and the Roman love of ease and luxury, the Roman effeminacy (a base false word, used here only *faute de mieux*), seized with wondrous power upon the barbarians, who settled amongst them, and played havoc with them also. We are reminded, as we read this page of history, of the disappearance of the Red Indian, as he vainly seeks to struggle against the white man and his fire-water and smallpox. Neither in the fifth, nor the nineteenth, nor any other century, has the experiment of putting new wine into old bottles been a successful one.

But who were these barbarians, to whom Rome looked for help in her hour of need, and before whom she had at length to bow? The word has an ugly sound, but it had really a very simple meaning. It was synonymous with 'foreigner,' and was originally applied to provincials whose dialect was uncouth and difficult to understand. All speakers of unknown tongues were 'barbarians' to the Roman, but the bar-

barians before whom the Western Empire fell were part of the great Teutonic race which made Hispania Spain, Gaul France, and Britain England, and which created the new (the Holy) Roman Empire.

Four centuries before Christ two great Teutonic tribes had forced their way across the Alps, and had settled in the fertile plains of Italy, and again and again for eight centuries did the Teutons return to attack the mighty power of Rome. In their greatest days the Romans never succeeded in subjugating the country which we now call Germany. The indomitable courage of the Teutons, the poverty of their townless land, and the vast impenetrable forests which covered it, kept them free when all other peoples had to pass under the yoke. The Romans were fain to content themselves with fostering intestine feuds, which were of frequent occurrence amongst the many tribes into which the Teutonic race was divided. Tacitus, in speaking of one of these, in which sixty thousand men perished, says: 'May the nations, enemies of Rome, ever preserve this enmity to each other! We have now reached the extreme of prosperity, and have nothing left to ask of fortune except the discord of these barbarians.' But Rome rotted at the core, and the inevitable end came; and in the seventh century we find that Italy has been invaded for the last time until modern days by a Teuton tribe, and that the

fierce Lombards, the 'Long-bearded men,' have taken possession of it, and retain their hold.

There has been much speculation upon the causes which led the Teutons from time to time to move southwards to Italy, just as there has also been upon the causes which led Celts and Teutons in more remote times to move westward into Europe from their (possibly) common Indian home. There does not seem to be much real difficulty in accounting for it. They were a brave and warlike people, with a contempt for settled life, without towns or arts, or any but the rudest form of agriculture. They had a climate of intense severity; they had a childish love for the good things which they had learned to believe Southern peoples possessed; they had an intense thirst for adventure, which indeed was necessary to their very existence. With certain well-established laws, with firm family ties, they had all the restlessness which springs from curiosity, from the absence of settled life, from the dearth of comfort. They carried with them wherever they went their wives and families, their only possessions; and one place was only better to them than another, in so far as it afforded to them more scope for conquest, and more spoil. Do not all migrations, Indo-European, Teutonic, those of the present day, spring from similar causes, from the causes which give to bachelors their want-begotten freedom?

Rome, at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, had probably touched the lowest point in her long history. Her old social life, luxurious, graceful, but false, had perished, from the corruption and self-indulgence which wealth brings to all peoples. Her power and dignity had fallen before the tread of the successful invader. Her Emperor dwelt at Constantinople; his exarch, or deputy, at Ravenna; the Lombard conqueror at Pavia. Famine, flood, and pestilence had laid their hands heavily upon her people. Her old faith had died away in elegant nihilism; her splendid but deserted temples had fallen before earthquakes and tempests; the noble statues which had once adorned them had been ruthlessly mutilated by the holders of a new belief, unable or unwilling to recognise the beauty of the old. The surrounding country, abandoned and neglected, had exchanged fertility for dreary and dangerous barrenness; and the Queen of Nations bade fair, at one time, to vanish from the face of the earth. But the intensest darkness precedes the dawn. When she ceased to be the mistress of the Old World, Rome became, in another and much higher sense, the mistress of a new and far wider world. The men, the holders of that new belief, conquered all their conquerors. They had gone through many a fierce and dreadful difficulty; they had gradually made their ground secure, in the face of trials which astound

us as we read of them; and the Bishops of Rome—not yet insisting upon supremacy over the Church; not yet claiming temporal power; submitting indeed with remarkable prudence to the miserable temporal powers that then were, and contented to derive their spiritual authority from the Byzantine Emperor—by astute statesmanship and able governance, preserved the admirable Roman Law, perpetuated the idea of the sacredness of the once Imperial City, and saved her from perishing with the Empire she had lost. Wherever the Teutons came in contact with the Church, they acknowledged her power, and became her children. But in that dark seventh century, the Church herself, although frequently governed by men of remarkable ability, and although destined ultimately to reign supreme, was far from being firmly established. She had yet scarcely formulated her belief; many so-called heresies abounded inside her borders; there were dangers within and without.

Rome's noblest province, Gaul, shared the fate of its sovereign Power. It had become more perfectly Roman than any other of the Imperial colonies, but, whilst gaining polish and learning, and having peace for some centuries secured to them, the Gauls lost all self-reliance, all power of self-defence, and fell an easy prey to the all-conquering Teuton. The Franks under Clovis and his successors made Gaul their own, and

from them it received its modern name. They divided it into several distinct kingdoms, which constantly carried on cruel and desolating wars with each other. The seventh century saw the royal power devolve upon those miserable relics of the Merovingian Kings, mere spectre monarchs, sunk in debauchery and effeminacy, whom History has justly styled '*les rois fainéants*.' Clovis had become nominally a Christian, and his services to the Church, and the facilities which he granted her, procured for the French Monarch the title of 'Eldest Son of the Church.' But Sons of the Church may yet be only indifferent characters, and the Merovingian Christianity did not partake more of the spirit of the Founder of the Christian faith than the Napoleonic Christianity by which we have been edified in our day. The Church got the position it wanted, and did not attempt to prevent the treachery, bloodshed, and cruelty which darken the pages of the early history of France, and which sowed bad seed the fruit of which France has continued to reap.

The state of the Eastern Empire during the seventh century affords nothing to relieve the gloomy picture which I have already drawn. Pressed upon from the north and west by the Gothic peoples and the Tartar tribes; with the Persian Empire casting off its yoke, carrying away its provinces of Egypt and Asia Minor, and threatening Constantinople itself; with its many

churches full of strange and irreconcilable beliefs, and its own faith somewhat differing from that of Rome; stained from time to time by frightful religious persecutions waged in the name of Christ; with its people presenting the melancholy spectacle of a dull uniformity of vice and abject slavishness; with its Emperor weak, supine, and superstitious, or strong and tyrannical; its existence was a troubled and precarious one. We look in vain for vestiges of the glories which had crowned it when Constantine gave it power or Justinian gave it law.

We turn with pleasure from this story of darkness, ignorance, and cruelty to the yet farther East, the scene of the most momentous event of the seventh century, the rise of Mahommedanism. The Arabs, a brave and generous, yet stern and unforgiving people, lived, for the most part, a pastoral life. Isolated by their geographical position from the western world, they showed little tendency towards aggression, but they were well able to defend themselves, and, although attacked in turn by African, Greek, and Roman, they were never subjugated. They were witty and fanciful, possessing a noble language and a brilliant literature. Idolaters themselves, they had the virtue of tolerance, so rare amongst Christian nations, and their land had become the refuge of the oppressed believers of many creeds, free there to worship as they chose. In the seventh

century these Arabs were suddenly aroused, by the magic influence of Mahommed, into the intensest life; became a warlike and aggressive people; spread over Persia, Asia Minor, and Northern Africa, extirpating the old faiths and implanting their new belief; took possession of Spain, and threatened the whole of Europe with similar conquest. Never in the history of mankind has there been so marvellous an uprising. None other creed has spread with such astonishing rapidity as that which declared, as its beginning and its end, that 'there is only one God, and Mahommed is his prophet.' Within a single century the Caliphs, his successors, became the most powerful and absolute monarchs of the globe, their sway extending from India and Tartary to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

With the exception of this doubtful and fitful light of Mahommedanism, wherever we have turned in that seventh century we have found darkness prevailing: 'darkness which might be felt.' Everywhere was the demon of war let loose; everywhere did his faithful attendants, plague and famine, follow in his train. The Old World life was at an end: learning in the West was dead: when Kings and Emperors could neither read nor write, their peoples were likely to lack knowledge; men had little time for thought or study when they could with difficulty save their lives. The order and symmetry of Roman rule was followed by chaos and

tumult. It was a time of breaking up, of lawlessness and cruelty, from the contemplation of which we are glad to turn. Let us turn, then, to our own land, where darkness still hangs over the scene, but where we can tell that the dawn is approaching.

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CHAPTER II.

ENGLAND IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

I DO NOT propose to dwell upon the political history of England during the seventh century. The Roman rule over Britain had ended nearly two centuries before, and had been followed by a period of anarchy and confusion, during which the English had appropriated the Island in a long series of conquering colonisations, which were completed by the middle of the sixth century. Although the Britons were not yet finally conquered, they were everywhere driven back, and the principal wars waged in this Island were those for supremacy amongst the various tribes of successful invaders. During the greater part of the seventh century Northumberland held the supremacy, and was at the height of its power, and it was in the early years of that century that Edwin, one of its greatest Kings, embraced the Christian faith. From that period the warfare, which was constantly going forward, was no longer one of extermination, but one for political greatness.

From whatever point of view we regard the intro-

duction of Christianity into our country, we are led to think gratefully of the good Pope Gregory, to whom we are indebted for it. Its results were manifold. England became an European nation, instead of a remote and disregarded Island. New modes of life sprang up: Englishmen began to dwell in cities; intellectual being was awakened and developed. Here, as elsewhere, 'peace on earth, good-will towards men,' was held to be figurative language, and neither the preaching nor the acceptance of Christ's doctrines was supposed to involve practising His precepts, but the new faith did somewhat soften the cruelty of war, and its promulgation was not attended by the hideous persecutions which disgraced it in other lands.

When we ask hòw it came that in England, with wars constantly being waged, such different results were attained to those upon the continent of Europe, we must not forget to give great weight to our happy geographical position. Even when the Romans held almost undisputed sway here the difficulties of communication made them find it convenient to let Britain be governed very much apart. The same difficulties gave our early Church a peculiarly national character. Reverencing Rome, she, nevertheless, acted independently, and she had from the first got rid of that shadow of Imperialism which so grievously encumbered many of the continental States. But, further, this

fortunate position saved England from the perpetual dread of foreign invasion. The troubles which the Norsemen gave her had not yet begun to be felt, and the Tartars, Lombards, Franks, and Arabs carried on their conquests at so great a distance that the sound of them scarcely reached these shores. Thus the conflicts from which England suffered, though frequent, were comparatively small and local. Compared with the continent, she was peaceful and settled.

I wish fully to acknowledge the great sverices of the Church in giving the English nation a place among the peoples of Europe, in mitigating the horrors of war, and in changing the habits and dispositions of our forefathers. Yet I am anxious not to permit gratitude to outrun judgment. Reform must be slow to be lasting, and must be from within, not from without. Great changes are only good in the fulness of time; for change in advance of its time, however admirable, is lost, excepting in so far as it aids in that slow process of education which will make it one day of practical worth. When we read of the baptism of our old English forefathers by thousands, we scarcely expect to find that the ceremony had much effect. It is not easy to get any trustworthy evidence of the facts themselves, for the old chroniclers share the sublime contempt for numerical accuracy of all writers in the early days of any race. But the broad truth

remains that, from the introduction of Christianity, England began to take rank amongst the Western nations, and Englishmen began to settle down into a law-abiding and civilised people.

The English were never a lawless, nor quite an uncivilised people: never, at all events, whilst in this England. Before the introduction of Christianity we find much about them which reminds us that we are their children—much also which makes us take down our 'Catlin,' and look with brotherly interest upon the Red Indian in his war-paint. Big, loose-boned, red-haired men, with cold, blue eyes; adorning themselves with bracelets and other trinkets; unable to live without fighting; unwilling to settle in towns; with small knowledge of the mechanical arts; ignorant of writing; when at home eating voraciously and drinking deeply, at times, from the skulls of their enemies. They submit to discipline; have regular gradations of rank; are chaste and monogamists; and woman is with them a person, not a thing. She rises at times to the highest power; and although, for the most part, the useful squaw, her position is even then higher, and has since remained so, than amongst other peoples. They live under certain laws, in the making of which every free man has a voice. Slavery exists amongst them, but it is as yet devoid of any features of atrocity. They are a strong, energetic, self-reliant people, not sensitive

nor much troubled with thought; but reverencing the unknown, and pre-eminently truthful.

Their religious belief was a rough and hard one. Their priests had little power, although their temples were reverenced with a feeling approaching ferocity. Odin and his kindred gods were stern and cruel, and were appeased at times by great human sacrifices. These English were of a child-like, imaginative disposition, and the world of their lives was filled with spiritual beings; all nature teemed for them with deities. Goblins dwelt in the woods, pixies in the fields, giants in the hills, and gnomes in the mines. The nursery tales which fascinated our childhood, and which never lose their charm, are but so many traces of these old beliefs. As the ancient Greek, seeking for the truth which is not far from every one of us, gave to each work of nature its appropriate divinity, and saw a God in each wonderful and beautiful object around him,—so the rude Northman, impelled by the same need of resting upon something higher and better than himself, also peopled the earth with divine life; but as the high culture of the Southern mind lent a charm and beauty to its creations which make us almost forgive and forget their grossness, so the want of that culture in the Northman brings us into contact with the coarse powers of evil rather than with the gracious essences of good. About his faith there

clung that sternness and gloom which is to this day characteristic of the religion of the North—a gloom which springs from the hard, uncertain, colourless nature of our climate,—from the cloudy skies and the sunless plains. Our forefathers were men of fabulous courage; of the firmest truthfulness and honour; of daring and discipline combined, which have never been surpassed. Creeds which would teach them to forgive injuries, to love their enemies, were for long intolerable to them. Death in battle was the crown of an honourable life: defeat was the one thing which no man could suffer and live. Old Siward, the Jarl of Northumbria, who, having become a Christian, could not commit suicide, caused himself, in his last moments, to be clothed in his trusty armour, and died standing erect in his mail, that he might not expire in bed, huddled up like a cow; and Radbond, the Frisian prince,* was stepping into the font, when he asked what was the fate of his ancestors who had died without having been baptised: 'They are all burning in the flames of hell,' was the reply of the eager monk. 'Wherever they are, I will be,' answered the faithful chief, and he stepped back into heathendom. They were wrong, and they lost their cause in the long run, these brave, simple, true-hearted Northmen; but we can understand why they hesitated before they left the

* See Appendix A.

life and faith which had given them what they wanted, for one which to them seemed fraught with cowardice, greediness, and cruel persecution.

When Christianity once began to spread amongst Englishmen its progress was peculiarly rapid, thanks to the wisdom of the monk-missionaries, who sagely exacted little. The twelve centuries during which it has held undisputed sway have not succeeded in destroying several of the characteristics which I have mentioned. Few men will deny that the natural progress of the human race (if we may speak of progress at all as natural) is from an animal to a spiritual or intellectual condition. As, amongst savages, we are constantly reminded of wild beasts, so, amongst civilised men, we are sometimes reminded of wild beasts, but more frequently of savages. And the progress is a very slow one; it is a polishing rather than an uprooting process; reform, not revolution. In the Englishman of to-day we find most of the features of the old Englishman; changed, indeed, by the wear and tear of so many centuries, polished and sometimes slightly concealed, but still there. No longer universally warriors, but passionately addicted to every form of mimic warfare in the chase, and with that stern joy in overcoming adverse circumstances which made the old Englishman the stubborn foe he was; still giving to woman a high and worthy place in society, and, to some extent, in the

State; still gloomy and fanatical in religion, though still with small reverence for priests; still to some extent fond of trinkets, although the leg has usurped the place of the arm, and garters—not bracelets—are the tokens of kingly favour; still huge eaters and deep drinkers; we are more polished, but no better than our fathers; more polished and more comfortable, for there was scant comfort in those old English halls, where the guests sat around stone tables upon rude forms, eat with their fingers, and slept where they fell senseless from their deep carouse.

I have said that Christianity (in its negative outward sense) spread rapidly in England. The desire for monastic life was quickly developed, and monasteries sprang up in many parts of the land. The various feelings which then prompted men and women to withdraw themselves from the world, lie on the surface and are readily understood. Some were afflicted by the war and tumult, the woe and misery, which everywhere surrounded them, and longed to shut it all out, and to live with their Divine Ideal ever before them, forgetting that you best honour those you love and reverence by following their example and teaching. Others were religious enthusiasts, upon whom belief acts like madness. Some were attracted by the wider sphere of usefulness, the greater power for good, which association with one common object gives; whilst others looked

for the distinction which accompanies the reputation of superior holiness, and for the certainty of victuals. In some places where isolation is a necessary condition of safety, such a course of life may be tolerated; and benefit certainly accrued at that early date from monastic establishments when under able control, although many of those which were carelessly looked after were simply scandalous and abominable. They were filled from all classes of the community, and were often presided over by persons whose worldly position gave them the prestige which the monks fully understood and valued.

Northumbria was the seat of some of the earliest and most famous of these monasteries. When King Edwin embraced the faith of Christ, through the persuasions of his wife Ethelburga and the missionary Paulinus, Hilda, the daughter of his nephew Hereric, followed his example. She was one of those women who are born to rule, who possess an influence wider, greater, and nobler than is given to men: she was of the salt of the earth. Resolved to lead a monastic life, she thought of retiring to France, and had spent a year at the monastery of Chelles in preparation for the duties which would devolve upon her, when Bishop Aidan, who had discovered her worth, gave her a small piece of land (the place of a single family—Bede calls it,) upon the north bank of the river Wear, where she

lived with a few companions for twelve months more. She was at this time thirty-three years of age.

The first Northumbrian woman who had devoted herself to a holy life, Heru or Heia by name, had founded a monastery at Heruteu, the 'Stag Island,' our modern Hartlepool, then no doubt an island covered with the dense oak forest, portions of which are laid bare at this day whenever excavations are made at that part of our coast. Heru shortly afterwards retiring to a more secluded spot, Hilda was appointed to the charge of the monastery of Heruteu, and she spent several years there. She soon showed what manner of woman she was. She at once began to bring all things into a regular system, acting under the instructions and advice of Bishop Aidan and other religious men who knew and loved her. Having governed this place wisely and well, and King Oswy having made her a grant of land sufficient for ten families at Streaneshalch,* the 'port of the beacon,' the Whitby of to-day, she undertook to build or to take charge of a monastery there. This monastery, under her wise care and benign influence, rapidly became the chief seat of learning, the head-quarters of religious training, in the North of England. The great synod which settled the deeply important question of whether Easter should be observed as the Celtic missionaries observed it, upon the

* See Appendix B.

fourteenth day of the first lunar month of the Jewish year, or, as the Roman missionaries observed it, on the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the month nearest to the vernal equinox, was fixed by King Oswy to be held at Hilda's monastery. The King himself presided, and his son King Alchfrid, with Bishops Wilfrid and Agilbert, argued the case for the Romans, and Bishop Colman for the Celts, whilst Bishop Cedd interpreted. The decision in favour of Roman views was another step towards England's European importance.

The monastery contained both monks and nuns, and so excellent was its discipline and so great the attention given to ecclesiastical training and education, that persons of the highest rank flocked thither to share in its benefits, and no fewer than six bishops were brought up under Hilda's care.

Kings and princes sought for the counsel and aid of this noble woman. She ruled her willing subjects firmly but wisely; she maintained and enforced the principles of justice, piety, chastity, peace, and charity. Her daughters in Christ loved her with passionate devotion. For the last six years of her beautiful life she was afflicted with constant fever, yet none the less did she continue publicly and privately to instruct and admonish the flock committed to her charge. She died in the year 680, admonishing her weeping brethren and sisters to preserve holy peace amongst themselves

and with others. She was indeed a woman of whom Northumbrians may be justly proud. She was herself a light shining in darkness, and her monastery the 'light-house monastery,' as her bay was the 'light-house bay.' Ever throughout her period of power being on the watch for merit of whatever kind which could be turned to religious use, it came to pass that Cædmon, our first English poet, was a dweller in the gentle Abbess Hilda's monastery at Whitby.

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CHAPTER III.

CÆDMON.

The site which Hilda chose for her monastery was a remarkable one. It looked less like luxury of living, and more like work, than some of those which were selected in later days, when monks began to wax fat. Towards the north, the River Esk flows through a deep and rocky gully, spreading into a broad bay as it nears the sea; to the east, the dark shale cliffs fall abruptly down to the German Ocean, which spreads its vast expanse of uncertain and dangerous waters to meet the distant horizon; and, in all other directions, after a brief interval of undulating green fields interspersed with clumps of trees and glimpses of the winding river, the great Yorkshire Moors stretch away into the land. At the foot of the monastery, which she built upon this wild and lonely spot, the picturesque and busy town of Whitby has sprung up. Her own building was destroyed by the Northmen towards the close of the ninth century. No part of it is now standing—no part of any building earlier than the twelfth century; but of the abbey then erected there are still traces,

although the principal portion of the north transept, the choir and the nave, which alone remain *in situ*, are of a later period.* The Lady Hilda's memory, however, still clings round the spot. It is supposed that her remains, which were taken to Glastonbury when her monastery was destroyed, were afterwards restored to their proper resting-place. The ammonites of the lias, which abound here, are popularly supposed to be snakes which, at her pious instance, were beheaded and turned to stone; and, if a man of robust faith, you may still perchance see at certain favoured times, near the northern window of the Abbey Church:

> "The very form of Hilda fair,
> Hovering upon the sunny air."

A monastery was rather a collection of buildings than a single structure. Not only were the monks and nuns to be provided with accommodation for sleeping and eating, as well as for the practice of their religious exercises; not only were there school-rooms and libraries to be planned; but there were chambers for the guests who, from time to time, partook of the hospitality of the Superior, or sought her advice and aid in times of need; and, in addition to all of these, there were the kitchens, stables, and other offices, including the dwellings of the churls who ministered to the bodily needs of the community.

These dwellings probably constituted the nucleus

* See Appendix C.

of the little town which usually sprang up in the vicinity of a great monastery. At the time when we first hear of Cædmon such a town may already have existed in the vicinity of the Lady Hilda's monastery; although the account given by Bede does not necessarily infer that such was the case. Cædmon had evidently occupied a menial position until he was well advanced in years. He was probably the ferry-man of the monastery, and assisted in the stables when his ordinary services were not needed.* At night, when the dependants met at supper and the meal was ended, the harp was passed from hand to hand and each man was expected to sing something. Cædmon had never learned to make verses, and he used therefore to leave the table when the singing began. One evening, when he had done this, he went to the stable, where he had to take care of the horses that night, and at the proper time he composed himself to rest. As he slept, a person appeared to him, and, saluting him, said, 'Cædmon, sing me something.' 'But,' he replied, 'I do not know how to sing; and because of this I have left the guest-chamber, and come hither.' The person who spoke to him answered, 'Still, you must sing to me.' 'What,' he asked, 'must I sing?' 'Sing the beginning of created beings,' was the reply; and Cædmon sang verses to the praise of God, and, when he awakened from his sleep, he remembered the verses of his dream.

* See Appendix D.

In the morning he went to the town-reeve (the steward of the town lands, or, as King Alfred calls him, the ealdor-man), his superior, and told him of the gift which he had received. He led him to the Abbess Hilda, who, with many learned men, listened to his story and his verses, and saw that God had given him heavenly grace.

And this we also may see, whatever we make of the dream which the Venerable Bede relates so graphically. This rude, uncultivated boatman, silent until of mature age, laughed at because no verse-maker, was in truth a poet, could see clearly with the inner eye; could also, from this night—in which, after deep humiliation and, doubtless, after long painful striving, he at length found utterance—make and fashion strong, earnest verses, which, twelve centuries after his voice has again become silent, are still good to listen to. Bede, in honest pride at his Northumbrian brother's excellence, says, 'Others, in the English people, after him, tried to make religious poems, but no one could be compared with him: for he learned the art of singing, not from men, but from God.'

The Abbess Hilda, having tested him, and found that he was indeed a poet, gladly received him into her monastery, where he became a monk, and she caused him to be taught the whole series of sacred history. He remembered that which he heard, and, as it were ruminating it—'chewing the cud of sweet and

bitter thought'—turned it into most sweet verse, and, sweetly repeating it to them, he made his teachers, in their turn, his hearers. He sang the creation of the world, the origin of the human race, and the whole history of Genesis; and made many verses upon the departure of the Children of Israel from Egypt, and their entry into the Land of Promise, with many other stories from the Holy Scriptures, concerning the incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Our Lord, the advent of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the Apostles; likewise of the terror of future judgment and the horror of hell's pain, but of the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom; and many more verses also about the Divine goodness and judgments, by which he endeavoured to withdraw men from the love of evil, and to excite in them the choice and practice of good. For he was a very religious man, and humbly submissive to regular discipline, but full of zeal against those who wished to act otherwise. Hence he ended his life beautifully.

I have so far followed the story, as told by the Venerable Bede, for the most part translating his very words, and I shall continue to do so in his account of the closing scene of our poet's life, which is of singular beauty. It is from Bede that we learn all that is known about the life-history of this great and good man, the true father of our English poetry.

When the time of his departure drew near he was

fourteen days troubled with bodily infirmity, yet so moderately that he could speak and walk all the time. There was a house in his neighbourhood to which they were wont to convey the weak and those about to die. He asked his attendant in the evening of the night on which he was to depart this life to prepare him a place of quiet there. He, wondering why he asked this, as he did not seem about to die, yet did that which he wished. / When he had been placed there he talked and joked cheerfully with those who had come thither before him; and, after midnight was passed, he asked of them all if they had the Eucharist there? They answered, 'What need is there of the Eucharist? for thou, who speakest to us so merrily as though in good health, art not likely to die.' 'And yet,' said he, 'bring me the Eucharist.' Having taken it in his hand, he asked if they all had a peaceful mind towards him, without enmity or rancour. They all replied that they had the most peaceful mind towards him, free from any anger; and in their turn asked him whether he was at peace with them. He answered immediately, I am at peace, children, with all the servants of God.' And thus, strengthening himself with the heavenly viaticum, he prepared to enter another life, and asked how near the hour was when the brethren must be awakened to say the nightly praises to the Lord. They said, 'It is not long;' and he, 'It is well; let us wait that hour,' and, signing himself with the sign of the

holy cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and, as though falling asleep, quietly ended his life.

And thus it came to pass that, as he had served God with a simple and pure mind and tranquil devotion, so, leaving the world by as calm a death, he went to His presence; and that tongue, which had composed so many salutary words in the Creator's praise, spake its last words also in His praise, signing himself and committing his spirit into His hands. And he seems to have had foreknowledge of his death.

The good Abbess Hilda died in the same year as Cædmon, 680 A.D. Bede, writing some fifty years after the events which he records, gives an interesting account of her life and labours also. We have no other record of the poet, excepting that contained in King Alfred's translation of the *Ecclesiastical History*, and the statement by William of Malmesbury that his bones were found at Whitby in the early part of the twelfth century.

The question of the truth of Bede's story has been repeatedly raised, and doubt has also been expressed whether the paraphrase to which we now give Cædmon's name is really his production. In order that we may come to a clear conclusion upon these points, I must give a short account of the history of the one manuscript of the poem which is now in existence.

This manuscript is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It is a small folio of 229 pages; the first 212 pages are written in a clear and careful hand, apparently

in the tenth century; the remaining seventeen pages are more carelessly written, and are probably in a less ancient hand, and are certainly copied by a different person. The grammar and orthography of the latter part (which forms a second book) are inferior in purity and care to those of the first part. The manuscript is illustrated up to the ninety-sixth page, and spaces are left for further illustrations up to the two hundred and thirteenth page.

It was at one time the property of the famous Archbishop Usher, Primate of Ireland, who founded the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, early in the seventeenth century, and whose reputation for learning was European and just. He was the man who gave us the dates in our reference Bibles to which, with the pride and courage of Englishmen, we adhere as stoutly as to the text itself. In his search for books for his college library he discovered this manuscript. At this time (1620 to 1650) there was living in England, as librarian to the Earl of Arundel, a learned and kindly man, Francis Dujon the younger, the son of a Professor of Divinity at Leyden. He was on friendly terms with most of the men of mark of that day, and intimately cultivated the acquaintance of John Milton amongst others. He is known in literature as 'Junius,' and aided in a translation of the Bible into Latin; but at this time his favourite study was Old English, and in it he

thought to find the etymologies of all the tongues of Northern Europe. To him Usher gave the manuscript which Junius afterwards bequeathed to the Bodleian Library. In the year 1655 he had it printed at Amsterdam, and published it as a small quarto without translation or notes. His verbal index to it is preserved with his other MSS. in the Bodleian Library, but is not printed with the book.

Is this paraphrase properly attributed to Cædmon? Those critics who answer this question in the negative justify their unbelief in two ways; they say, in the first place, that the style and language of the paraphrase are later than Cædmon's time; and, in the second place, that the opening lines differ from those given by King Alfred in his translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. They argue from this that the paraphrase is the work of some later imitator of Cædmon, but the contention does not seem to me to be a just one. The lines which King Alfred gives are but a free translation of those contained in Bede's *History*. If in that *History* they were said to be the opening lines of Cædmon's first outburst into song, they would still have gone through the process of translation from English into Latin, and of retranslation into English by King Alfred, a process in which much of the character of the original would be inevitably lost. But Bede is careful to state explicitly that he only gives Cædmon's meaning and

not his words, and Alfred was never careful exactly to reproduce his original. There is further no reason whatever for supposing that the verses of Cædmon's dream were the precise words which his scribe afterwards wrote down amongst his poems. There is a general resemblance to the opening lines of the paraphrase, but it may well have been that Cædmon himself composed more than the first verses which he wrote upon this same great theme.

At the same time, we must not forget that the poems which Cædmon made were written down from his dictation, and that we have not even the original manuscript thus written. In all such cases it is absurd to expect perfect literal accuracy; and, indeed, where religious people have had to deal with such matters, we shall generally find that they have been somewhat unscrupulous in their treatment of their original; they have been ready to make it coincide with their ideas of what it ought to be. I have no doubt that much which is not Cædmon's has been interpolated, and that he had little to do with the so-called second book. I shall point out my reasons for these conclusions, as I examine his poems more carefully; but I can see no good reason to doubt that the greater portion of the first book is really the work of the old poet of whom Bede so strikingly says: 'None could ever compare with him, for he learned the art of singing, not from men, but from God.'

CHAPTER IV.

CÆDMON'S METRICAL PARAPHRASE—THE INTRODUCTION.

It has already been pointed out that there is a gap of three centuries between the date of Cædmon's death and the writing of the only manuscript of the paraphrase which we possess: a period of time longer than that which separates us from Shakspeare. What marvel that in those centuries much injury should have been done to the true old work! The familiarity of the subjects dealt with must have frequently proved an irresistible temptation to subsequent pious improvers, and it is, in all probability, only in parts that we have now anything like the original work of the old Whitby monk. The grand points of the story, those in which the poet thoroughly warms to his subject, are the descriptions of battles. These are always powerful and picturesque. But much of the work is the merest paraphrase: a versified edition of portions of the Old Testament, the monotony and wearisomeness of which is from time to time relieved by a striking epithet, or by some little touch speaking of Old English life and thought, and showing that Cædmon had thoroughly

understood and vividly pictured to himself the things which his fellow monks had taught him.

The earlier portion of the poem contains no doctrine —Christ is not even mentioned in it. The later part is much more theological but not so poetical; it makes up in theology what it lacks in poetry. This will be more carefully gone into in its proper place, and I only mention it here as another proof that the work has been greatly tampered with. It is not probable that Cædmon should have begun his work in a true, vigorous, poetical spirit: should have flashed out from time to time into bright bursts of poetic vision; but should have lapsed into mere piety as he approached the more vital, though less comprehensible parts of Scripture. I do not wish to insist upon this too strongly, because I cannot but feel that this charge, made in so general a manner, might, perhaps, apply to our great modern religious poet, John Milton, who, in a measure, following the course of the paraphrase, has similarly failed. In considering the second book in detail I trust to be able to make my position clearer and more assured.

The Paraphrase is written in the Old English alliterative verse. As alliteration now-a-days means simply an adherence to a repetition of the same initial letter without any reference to rule, it may be well briefly to explain what this alliteration used to be. There was no rhyme in the oldest English poetry: there

was rhythm, and this was obtained by the certain recurrence of the same letter. In true alliterative verse each line is divided into two sections by a pause, usually marked in manuscripts by a dot. Each section or half-line contains two or more strongly accented or loud syllables, two being the usual number. The initial letters common to two or more of these loud syllables are called the rime letters, and each line should have two rime-letters in its first section, and one rime-letter in its second section. The rime-letters in the first section are called sub-letters, that in the second section the chief or key letter. The key letter should begin the former of the two loud syllables in the second section of the line, but the other of such syllables should not begin with a rime-letter at all. If the key letter be a consonant, the sub-letters should be the same consonant, or should have the same sound: if a vowel, they should also be vowels, but not necessarily the same vowels.

An illustration will make this very general explanation of alliteration abundantly clear:—

*h*aeleð *h*elm on *h*eafod asette· ⁊ þóne fúll *h*eárde gebánd·
*sp*enn mid *sp*ángum· wiste him *sp*ráeca *f*elâ·
*w*ora *w*orda· *w*and him úp þanon·
* * * * * * *
*o*ððaet he *á*dam· on *e*orð-*r*ice·

In the second section of the first line the key letter

is *h*, whilst the initial letter of the other loud syllable is *b*: in the first section there are three sub-letters (*h*). In the second section of the second line the key letter is *sp*, the other loud initial letter *f*, and there are two sub-letters (*sp*) in the first section. In the third line the key letter and sub-letters are *w*, the other loud syllable in the second section beginning with *þ*. In the fourth line the key letter is a vowel (*e*); the sub-letters are also vowels, but different vowels, *o* and *a*; whilst the second loud syllable in the second section of the line has a consonant (*r*) for its initial letter.

And now let us return to the Introduction to the Paraphrase. It is much the finest and most complete part of the whole work, and is altogether of greater power than the remainder. It deals with the Rebellion of the Angels, and the Fall of Man. It opens with an ascription of praise to the 'Ward of the Skies,' 'The Glory-King of Hosts,' magnifying Him as 'The Source of Might,' 'The Head of all high-shaped Ones,' 'The Lord Almighty, without beginning or end.' It then tells of the 'Bairns of Glory,' 'The Bands of Angels,' and of their bright bliss when they knew not sin. It next describes briefly the ward of the angels erring through pride. He thought to divide Heaven's kingdom, and persuaded his followers to aid him to gain a home and lofty seat in the north part of it. Then God was angry with that crowd whom He

had before honoured with beauty and glory, and shaped for them an exiled home. In that deep, dreamless torture-house, charged with sulphur, furnished with perpetual night, filled throughout with fire and sudden chill, reek and red lowe, were hard punishments and groans of hell. Then, in the old poem, we see God arise in anger: it is as though we read of some great English leader avenging himself on his adversaries. 'Stern of mood, grimly grieved, He griped them wrathfully in foeman's hands, and broke them in His grasp.' He sent the hateful band, the groaning ghosts, on a long journey. Their boast ('yelp' is the actual word used) void, their strength bowed, their beauty waned, they urged their darksome way into exile, where they knew woe and pain and sorrow, for they had begun with God to war. Then after, as before, was there peace in Heaven.

What a dreadful fiend the God of the early Church was! Cruel, stern and vindictive, beyond all belief! The God of the Jews, with the worst attributes of the pagan deities added to Him: and yet Cædmon's God is not more cruel than Dante's; and Christ had lived, and Paul and John had written centuries before the earlier poet sang. 'God is love' must have had a strange sound to some of those who listened to monkish explanations of the Deity's delight in barbarous vengeance.

Compare with this opening of the Paraphrase the commencement of 'Paradise Lost,' when Milton speaks of 'The Infernal Serpent':—

'What time his pride
Had cast him out from heaven, with all his host
Of rebel angels; by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the Most High,
If he opposed; and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in heaven and battel proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.
* * * * * * *
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,
As one great furnace, flamed! yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell; hope never comes,
That comes to all; but torture without end
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.'

I have no wish to push matters too far in an attempt to show that Milton was in a measure indebted to Cædmon, but it is difficult not to believe that so true a poet and so keen an observer had not

appreciated, in the older poem, the grandeur of opening the sacred theme in this manner, and taken a hint from it. We do not expect to find much mental introspection in the earlier poet's work: he seldom adds the torments of the mind to those of the body in the way which in 'Paradise Lost' so intensifies the terror. Our out-of-doors-living forefathers would hardly have understood him if he had been capable of doing so, and had done it.

After this introduction there follows a brief account of the Creation, over which we need not linger, although it shows us the vivid way in which Cædmon actually pictured to himself the things of which the monks told him. He draws over and over again 'the idle and useless ground over which the dark cloud hung in constant night, swart under heaven, wan and waste,' ere the Lord of life bade light to come forth over the wide deep, and the earth to take form. The story of the creation is imperfect in the manuscript, and breaks off when Adam has received from God a noble woman, and they have been given their instructions and have entered into possession of their new and beautiful world. It is worth noting that in the speaking of the sea as the 'whale-road' we find one of those picturesque combinations which form a principal feature of Old English poetry, and give it frequently so rich a colour.

The poet now returns to heaven, and tells how, amongst all the tribes of angels, one had been made 'highest after God in heaven's kingdom, so fair, so beauteous in form, that he was like to the light stars. It was his to work the praise of the Lord; it was his to hold dear his dreams in heaven, and to give Him thanks for the light he had so long enjoyed.' But he grew proud and overbearing, and began to raise war against 'Him who sitteth on the holy stool.' His body was light and shining, white and bright of hue—why should he serve God when he himself had a greater power and force of followers! In the North he would erect his throne. 'Why shall I toil? quoth he: I need no superior: with my hands I can work as many wonders; I have power to form a more god-like and higher throne in heaven. Why shall I serve for His favour? bow to Him as vassal? I may be a god, as He. Stand by me, strong comrades, who will not fail me in this strife. Heroes of hard mood, renowned warriors, have chosen me for chief: with such I may take counsel, with such gather followers. They are my faithful friends: I may be their chieftain, and rule in this realm. Thus it seems wrong that I should cringe to God for any good. I will no longer be His vassal.'

Then he reaps the reward of his treason: God in anger hurls him from his lofty seat, and, with all his

comrades, he falls three days and three nights into the swart hell.

How this simple, powerful word painting of our oldest poet recals the words which Milton puts into Satan's mouth when he tells the faithful Abdiel—

> 'Our own right hand
> Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
> Who is our equal: then thou shalt behold
> Whether by supplication we intend
> Address, and to begirt the Almighty throne
> Beseeching or besieging.'

The stirring lines in which Cædmon draws this scene remind us also of the Old English 'Beowulf,' the war romance which the English probably brought with them from the true old England across the German Sea. No doubt he knew it well, and it was insensibly with him, when the fallen angels became 'renowned warriors,' 'heroes of hard mood.' In those old fighting days strife of some sort was the one possible outcome for a healthy and vigorous man. Thought was not: commerce was not: manufacture was not: society was yet far too unsettled to admit of them. With the struggle for existence going fiercely forward it was impossible to abstract one's self from the actual world, and to reflect systematically upon matters not immediately connected with real life. But when men withdrew from the conflict into the quiet cloister they

gained time and leisure for meditation. Cædmon had shared the active as well as the passive mode of life; and he entered into his lettered ease with his mind stored with memories of the stirring past. He must have heard the war songs sung; from his peculiar pleasure and power in the description of warfare we may readily infer that he too had marched to battle with the whizzing of arrows in his ears; now he listened eagerly to the Bible tales, and he pictured them to himself as vivid and intense realities; and, when he at length found a voice, he sang out of the fulness of his heart that which had been stored up in it through long patient and silent years; and his Deity is his Northumbrian chief, his Satan and rebel angels, the pretenders to the throne, and the strife in heaven, such as he had himself assisted in.

In this and in the following portion of the Paraphrase we are again constantly reminded of 'Paradise Lost.' In both poems the general plan is similar; in each there are two descriptions of the fall; in the later poem, in the first book, are introductory and more general statements, as in the Paraphrase, and in the sixth book a more detailed account, given by the angel Raphael to Adam. Then Cædmon gives us a thrilling description of hell; the fierce speech of Satan boiling for vengeance against God, and resolving to get it through the newly-created man; the appeal to some

follower to visit earth with this object; the ascent of a wily fiend,—not of Satan himself, as in Milton—the temptation; the fall; and the bitter punishment. This is the plan which Milton also adopts. It is not necessary to make too much of this: both poets were drawing inspiration from the same sources: both had the same Scriptures, and the same legendary lore; but, in addition to this close similarity of plan, there are many coincidences of detailed treatment which lead to the inevitable conclusion that Milton knew the older poem, and, like a wise man and a true poet, knew also how to profit by it.*

In this belief there is surely nothing, in the smallest degree, depreciatory to the great Puritan poet. We do not think less of Chaucer's tales or of Shakspeare's plays because we know the sources whence they sprang. It is not an unworthy but rather a high and noble thought that these two great Christian poets,

> 'Their god-like heads crown'd with spiritual fire
> And touching other worlds,'

were not only bound together in the common brotherhood of song, but that 'Paradise Lost,' that glorious fountain of Divine majesty and truth, was fed and nourished from the pure, though slender, well-spring of all English verse; that John Milton, in his blindness, heard the voice of the true old singer, and accepted the aid he offered.

* See Appendix E.

Before passing to the further consideration of Cædmon's treatment of his great theme, I may point out that, whereas Cædmon says that 'the fiend with all his comrades fell through as long as three days and nights from heaven into hell,' Milton says, in the first place—

> 'Nine times the space that measures day and night
> To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
> Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf.'

But, in the second account, he gives the time to the act of falling, not to the length of the stupor occasioned by the fall—'Nine days they fell.'

Cædmon's description of hell is of great power. As you read it you feel that he speaks of what he has seen; that, like Dante, he had passed through the Hope-deserted portal, and gazed upon the dread torments of the damned ones face to face. He tells of the grim, bottomless abyss filled with intense burning heat, bitter reeks of smoke, swart mists, night immeasurably long, and, ere dawn, cometh the east wind and frost-bitten cold. When, unable to bear the blending of fiercest fire and most freezing frost, the lost ones seek another land; they come to one that is 'lightless and liges full,' void of light and full of flame. I know none other words which call up such a dread picture as these. Milton has the same idea in a kindred passage, but it is not so terse, so condensed, as Cædmon's:

'Yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe.'

In the 22nd verse of the 10th chapter of Job we also find a similar idea: 'A land of darkness, as darkness itself: and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness.'

They are all powerful, all dreadful, but Cædmon's, 'without light and full of flame,' is much the strongest. It is an Inferno in a line.

It is followed by a soliloquy so vividly told, so grand, so full of shadows of the not grander soliloquy in 'Paradise Lost,' that I give it in our modern English, although I find it impossible to preserve a tithe of the force of the grand old mother tongue:

Within him welled his thought about his heart;
Hot was without him his wrathly woe:
He spake these words:
'This narrow place is most un-like
That which we knew once high in Heaven's realm,
Which my Lord gave me, though we may not own it,
To the All-powerful must yield our rule.
Yet hath He not done rightly us to fell
To the fiery bottom of this hot hell,
Bereaving us of Heaven's kingdom, and decreeing
Its peopling by man.
'This is of sorrows most
That Adam, wrought of earth,
Shall my strong seat possess,
And joy be his whilst we this woe,
This hell-harm must endure.

'Oh could I but wield my hands,
Might I for one tide be without,
Wer't but one winter's space,—then with this host,
I———

'But about me lie iron bands,
Presseth this heavy chain,
I am powerless:
Hard hell-links firmly grasp me:
Above and below is mickle fire:
Never saw I loathlier landscape:
The flame never slackens, hot over hell:
Close-clasping rings, hard polished bonds,
Prevent my onward course.
My feet are bound, my hands are chained:
The ways from these hell-doors are vanished:
I cannot flee from my weary bonds:
Great girdles of hot iron lie about me
With which God fastens down my neck.'

Thus, then, we find that the God whom Cædmon worshipped differs but little from Him whom Milton inflicted so long upon our English faith: the Judaic God, the God of Vengeance, delighting in the cruel torments of His enemies; not the God of Love, of whom Christ preached. Our sympathies are not with Him, but with His victim in each case. The poet does his work too well; but it is humiliating to think that ten centuries of prayer and preaching brought no truer and brighter conception: that even now much of our religious life groans beneath the burden of this dark and un-Christian belief; that the love of God, as shown

by the love of man, has been and is so strangely misinterpreted.

It is perhaps convenient that, notwithstanding the uncertainty as to the true authorship of the second book of the Paraphrase, I should here give a portion of one of Satan's soliloquies from it, in order that we may have a fuller knowledge of this old conception of his character. I am inclined to think that this passage is really Cædmon's. In that which I have just quoted actual physical torture is most strongly insisted upon: there is, indeed, a comparison of the hell in which he lies with the heaven from which he has fallen; there is also the bitter thought that the very paths between the two are destroyed; but the pains are nearly all material. In this which I am about to quote the mental torments are much more strongly insisted upon. As we read it we think of Milton's:

'Now conscience wakes despair
That slumber'd; wakes the bitter memory
Of what he was, what is, and what must be,
Worse; of worse deeds, worse sufferings must ensue.'

We remember also Dante's—

'Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria.'

'For a sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things.'

I have, in this case, ventured to modernise the extract more completely than in the preceding one,

but I have tried, at the same time, to adhere faithfully to the spirit of the text :

Thus, as like fire-gleam, brilliant he stood,
The damnéd fiend spake forth, through that dread den,
His many woes in words with venom blended:—
'I am limb-fast and wounded sore with sins,
So that I cannot move in this high hall
Where hot and cold at times together mix,
Where hell's disciples otherwhiles I hear,
A sorrowing race, deep down in the abyss,
Moaning their vanished earth ; and sometimes see
Serpents wind cruelly round naked men.
This windy hall is all with horror filled,—
Nor may I hope to find a happier home
In town or burg, nor, on creation bright,
May I gaze once again with gladdened eyes.
Now is it worse to me that, in old days,
I ever knew the Angels' blessed song,
I ever was a form of heavenly light,
Where all, I with them, ever circled round
The Blesséd Child with Hallelujah song.
I may not claim allegiance from aught
Save those whom He rejects,—such may I bring
Down to this bitter gulf, sad captives, home.
We are not now as erst we used to be
When, high in heaven, graceful and glorious,
We raised the love-songs' words around our Lord.
Now I am sin-defiled and sin-defaced ;
Now I must bear this weary load of woe,—
Burning in hottest hell, of hope bereft.'

Surely these lines must awaken our sympathy, as the brave outburst of the preceding lines arouses our admiration. Surely Burns must have had such a vision

in his mind when, with that wondrous depth of love which makes us love him so, he sang—

> 'I'm waes to think upon yon den
> E'en for your sake.'

Truly there is little to hate in the Satan of either Cædmon or Milton. We find fierce revenge against savage tyranny, but there is not much low, mean cunning, and there is infinite nobility under terrible trial. Of the two I hold Cædmon's Satan to be the nobler.

The beginning of the conference between Satan and his followers, at which it is determined that an attempt shall be made to win man from his allegiance to God, is imperfect. The manuscript, as we have it, opens in the middle of a speech from the arch-fiend himself, who seems indeed to have been the only speaker. He is urging that, although God can accuse them of no sin, He has deprived them of light, and cast them into the greatest of torments, nor can they wreak vengeance upon Him, or reward Him with open hostility. He has, however, made a world where He has wrought man after His own likeness, and from man He will obtain pure souls to re-people heaven. Hence they must strive earnestly to pervert Adam, and so atone for their wrongs by causing him and his children to suffer. God's mind they cannot change; never again shall they know the angels' bliss; let them turn

it away from the children of men, so that they shall not have the Kingdom of Heaven, but shall be cast from God's favour, and seek the grim depths of this Hell, where they shall be held as vassals.

'Let us begin to think about this deed:
If I of old to any follower gave
A chieftain's gift whilst we in that good realm
Sat happily: never before could he
Repay me such rich recompense as now.
Let him pass through these cliffs and fly to where
Adam and Eve stand circled round with weal
Whilst we are cast into this woeful dell.
They are held highly in the Lord's esteem,
And sorely doth it rankle in my thought
That they shall once our rightful realm possess.
If any of you can it so achieve
Thus they may break through guile the Lord's command
And become hateful to Him, I can rest
E'en in these chains, and will him recompense
With seat for ever by my side.'

I have somewhat condensed the passage, but have given nearly the words of the original, and have preserved its full meaning. How closely similar it is to Beelzebub's counsel in 'Paradise Lost'!—

'What sit we then projecting peace and war?
War hath determin'd us, and foil'd with loss
Irreparable:
* * * * * * *
What if we find
Some easier enterprise? There is a place,
(If ancient and prophetic fame in heaven
Err not) another world, the happy seat

Of some new race called Man, about this time
To be created like to us, though less
In power and excellence; but favour'd more
Of Him who rules above.
* * * * * * *
Thither let us bend all our thoughts to learn
What creatures there inhabit; of what mould
Or substance: how endued, and what their power,
And where their weakness; how attempted best,
By force or subtlety.
* * * * * * *
Seduce them to our party, that their God
May prove their foe, and with repenting hand
Abolish his own works. This would surpass
Common revenge, and interrupt his joy
In our confusion; and our joy upraise
In his disturbance: when his darling sons
Hurl'd headlong to partake with us
Their frail original and faded bliss,
Faded so soon.'

The acceptance of Satan's offer is missing from the manuscript, and the tale opens again when a fiend with a crafty soul, full of wary words, is preparing for his earthward journey:—

'Sprang he up thence,
And shot him through hell's doors: strong heart had he,
Crafty and lion-like,—a mind of hate:
With a fiend's power he dash'd the fire aside.'

Compare this with Milton's description of how Satan

'With fresh alacrity and force renewed
Springs upward like a pyramid of fire,
Into the wild expanse:'

'On each hand the flames
Driven backward slope their pointing spires, and, rolled
In billows, leave in the midst a horrid vale.'

The fiend finds Adam and Eve standing by the trees of life and death, and, making himself into a 'worm' (serpent or dragon), and taking of the fruit, he tells Adam that God has sent him to give to him to eat; but Adam in a noble speech rejects his offer as false. He turns to Eve, whom he threatens with God's anger if she will not eat of the fruit; and presages dreadful consequences to her offspring. He tells her that, if she will eat it, she may afterwards rule Adam, and that her obedience will atone for Adam's refusal to accept God's offer. It is a skilful piece of temptation, and succeeds but too well. God has given to Eve the weaker mind; she eats of the fruit; the fiend causes the earth to seem fairer to her, and declares that her beauty shines with the light which he had brought to her from God, and then he persuades her to urge and plead with Adam, until at last the frequent entreaties of the fairest of women prevail; the man's mind turns to her will, and he takes from her hand hell and death. Surely there is something in this grand old allegory which we may apply to our own daily lives.

No sooner is the deed done than the successful fiend, breaking into bitter laughter, exults in his dark deed. Satan's will has been done; Adam and Eve are

led away from the love of God; they may no longer hold heaven's kingdom, but must make the dark journey to hell. No longer need their joy make Satan mourn where he lies bound. God's favoured creature Man must come to him in the flame.

'To God is sorrow also given and harm:
On Adam is our misery avenged:
Hated by God, and with the pain of death;
Man's loss and misery shall heal my mind:
My heart is big with joy that all our wrongs
Have found such sweet revenge. Now go I back
And seek out Satan neath the roofs of hell
Where mid the flames he lies in heavy chains.'

The sad time of bitter regret which followed the Fall is powerfully depicted: the words of sadness, the weeping of the woman, the mental agitation, the joint prayers, and then Adam's fierce upbraiding of Eve:—

'Seest thou now the swart hell
Greedy and anxious?
Now thou mayest its raging
Hear from hence.'

He bewails him for the hunger and thirst, the heat and the cold, which hitherto they had never known, and rues him that he had asked God to make him a companion, and that he ever saw her.

The sheenest (brightest) of women, the most beautiful of wives, answers him meekly:—

'Thou mayest me blame
Loved Adam mine
With thy words,
Yet thee it cannot worse
In thy soul rue
Than it doth me at my heart.'

Then they both departed sorrowing into the green wood, and decked their bodies with leaves, and waited God's commands. The rest is an expansion of the record in Genesis, and has much solemnity and beauty. It ends by recording that the Almighty Father, for their solace, let the roof adorned with holy stars remain, and gave them amply of the riches of the earth.

Briefly to sum up the points of resemblance between the story

'Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe—'

as told by Cædmon and by Milton: in each the subject is introduced in a similar manner, a general account of the rebellion of the Angels being given in the first place, and a more detailed account afterwards. Cædmon treats the fall, the discussion of the means of revenge, the resolve to wound God through his new creature man, the embassy to earth, the temptation, the disobedience, and its consequences, in such a manner that they seem to us as a shadow of 'Paradise Lost,'—as

the skeleton which Milton made the living body. The Paraphrase is the sketch; 'Paradise Lost' the finished picture: but the sketch is also the work of a master, and has the strange interest which good sketches ever possess. The conceptions of Satan and of Hell have a remarkable similarity. In the dreadful pictures which he draws Cædmon is in no way inferior in power to Milton, but he gives us none of those exquisite love passages in which Milton revels. Love, as we know it, was unknown to our old English forefathers. Amongst them, compared with Southern people, woman held indeed a favoured place, varying then, as now, according to her ability and merit, or the intelligence of the men with whom she was associated. She was the powerful ally and honoured equal, or the useful and estimable drudge. But so far as we can judge from our early literature, that which we call Love had no recognised place. I do not, of course, mean to deny that natural affection existed, that the relation of husband and wife was a pure and noble one; but the courtly and higher, or perhaps lighter form of love, 'the maiden passion for a maid,' was apparently absent. That came to us from the south. Our forefathers lived an out-of-doors life; they were a somewhat grim, earnest people, with more force than refinement. Their songs were of battle, of religion, of death, solemn, grand, and gloomy; as far removed from the gay Provençal songs in which

love of a sort abounds and little else, but love reduced to a regular system of bright, thoughtless, frivolous courtliness, as the stern Englishman living only for war or the chase was from the merry Frenchman loving to wile away the sunny hours in song and dalliance sweet. And, thanks to that gloom and seriousness, when our own poets learned to sing of love, it was not in the idle and profligate way of those who taught them; but womanly purity was still held in honour; and love, to be lovely, must still be honest. Not until our own degenerate days did English poets deliberately preach the beauty of woman's shamelessness, the rapture of unbridled lust.

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CHAPTER V.

THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY WORLD.

The Paraphrase goes on systematically with the Bible story, varying it in very few points from that given in the authorised version, but introducing many explanatory speeches, weaving the incidents together in a picturesque way, which shows how fully and vividly Cædmon had realised them. From first to last we learn to understand what Bede says, that when the stories had been told him he ruminated them, and turned them into vigorous verse. We have in the first place the Murder of Abel by Cain: we hear how, when Abel's offering was accepted in preference to his, anger was heavy at Cain's heart, rage took away his mind; hate swelled in the chieftain's breast, ire with envy. This multiplication of the same idea in different forms is characteristic of Old English as of Hebrew poetry. After his sentence Cain went, sad of mind, from the sight of God—a friendless wretch—and dwelt in the east lands, far from his father's care, where a maiden fair brought forth offspring to him. Who she was or how she got there is not explained.

Cædmon adopts the Rabbinical tradition that Lamech murdered Cain, the beloved kinsman of his sons, well knowing that God's vengeance, sevenfold great, would fall upon him for the crime, that it would be visited upon him with grim horror after death.

There is but little to note in the account of the patriarchs, excepting that they are constantly described as the dispensers of gold. This is an interesting allusion to the custom which obtained amongst the old English chiefs of rewarding their followers by presents. We shall have to allude to this again. A leader was esteemed noble who gave liberally to his adherents. Nepotism was esteemed a virtue then, although nowadays only spiritual leaders and judges are permitted to look upon it as such, and to practise it freely.

The story becomes more interesting when we come to the Deluge. This was an event which was certain to make a vivid impression upon the simple, child-like mind of the poet. He elaborates the strange Biblical idea of the repentance of the Deity; greatly He rued that He had ever created man when He saw their crimes, their admiration of the beauty of the women, daughters of His enemies. He determined, grimly and sorely, to punish them with hard might, to destroy all on earth save Noah, who was dear to Him, for he was of good courage, just, and meek—him the Almighty Helm promised 'Thou shalt have peace with

thy sons when the wail streams swell with wearied ones, with rebels full of sin.' Then Noah willingly built the mickle sea-chest, and strengthened it within and without against the flood with a wondrous kind of earth-lime, ever the harder the harder the rough water beat against it—a hint that concrete was not forgotten in England, that some of the Roman lessons had borne fruit.

When the dear chieftains and their incongruous possessions had entered into the sea-house, and the Lord had closed its mouth, He sent rain from heaven, and let the well-burns throng in the world. The dread streams swayed darkly, the waves up-rose over their shore-walls; men's birthplaces were buried; the sea gripped strongly the dying people; and the ark rode under the welkin over the sea's ring; the sea-drenching flood stood fifteen ells deep over the downs.

When it at length began to sink, the chieftains and their wives also long that they might step over the nailed boards, over the sea-strath, and lead forth their possessions. Noah let a swart raven fly from the house over the dark flood, thinking it must needs return if it found not land over the wide water; but he was deceived, for the 'fiend perched on the floating corpses, the sallow-feathered him would not seek.' Then, seven days after, he let a dove fly far over the deep water, but she found no rest:

'Went the wild fowl at even
The ark to seek over wan way,
Weary and hungry to sink
Into the hands of the holy man.'

The rest of the story has little in it that is striking, and the Paraphrase is but an expansion of the Biblical narrative until it comes to the life of Abraham. As this is one of its strong points I shall dwell somewhat minutely upon it.

After mentioning the birth of Abraham and Haran, two comely men, and of Haran's son Lot, lovely in life, the story passes at once to Abraham's marriage. In this part of the Paraphrase we have more of female beauty and sexual love than is at all usual in it or in other old English poems, but, as in the Bible, we get an unpleasant idea of Sarah. She does not seem at all the help-meet for such a noble man as Abraham, so far as intellectual matters are concerned, although her loveliness is readily and fully acknowledged. She is called, 'woman bright in beauty,' 'sweet bed-companion,' 'may of elf-sheen,' 'winsome beauty,' 'bride with blonde hair,' &c. Abraham, too, is spoken of as the 'bairn blithe of mood,' 'wise-heedy,' 'war-board swinger,' 'bracelet ward,' 'sage dispenser of gold.' And, still showing the store our forefathers set on jewels, 'the bride and her bracelets' are specially dwelt upon.

Abraham's leaving Haran and entering into the Land of Promise are fully detailed, and then we hear how, when the hard hunger was wail-grim to the home-sitting men, Abraham sought a dwelling in Egypt, where he 'Saw the white horn-halls of the Egyptians, and their high burgh brightly glitter.' We learn that Pharaoh, 'the dispenser of treasure,' 'the helm (protector) of noble ones,' led Sarah to his own hall, and gave Abraham honour; but, when he suffered from the untruths which that blessed man had told to him, he gladly sent him and his wife away to Bethel, where they set up their hall for the second time.

Then we read of the separation of Abraham and Lot, and how Lot chose Sodom to dwell in, taking with him there bracelets and wound (twisted) gold. There follows a very fine description of the war which the four Northern kings waged against Sodom. We find again how fighting always comes home to Cædmon, how he fires up when he speaks of it, and the somewhat monotonous jog-trot of the Paraphrase becomes really stirring verse. He tells us how many a fearful bleak-faced girl must go trembling into a stranger's arms; how the warriors for brides and bracelets fell sick with wounds. The hostile troops came spreading over the land and exacting tribute.

'Then fared they together,
Javelins were loud,
Wroth wail-crowds,
Sang the wan birds
Under the harm-shafts,
Dewy feathered,
The rush looking for.

* * * *

There was hard play,
Wail-spears wrestled,
War-cry mickle,
Loud battle sway.
The heroes with their hands
Drew from their sheaths
The ring-mailed swords,
Doughty of edges.
There was easily found
Death-bargain to the earl
Who was not early
Satisfied with strife.'

Then a warrior, leaving the war-wolves and the weapons behind, seeks Abraham, and tells him the sad tale. He gathers together his hearth-people, three hundred ash-bearers, faithful to their lord, each of whom he knew could well wage war with the fallow linden; and, with them, he attacks the north men under the shade of night, and the lives of the foes fell thickly where, laughing, they had borne the spoil. There was again the din of spears and shields, and the whizzing of arrows. Lot is rescued, and the poet

tells how the women, gladly returning, saw 'the birds tearing amongst the battle corpses:'

> 'The swollen fowls upon the mountain cliffs
> Sit bloody, with the slaughter of those bands
> Filled grossly.'

Cædmon dwells at some length upon the blessing which Melchizedek bestowed upon Abraham, and the interview between Abraham and the prince of Sodom, to whom all his possessions are restored, and the next canto shows Abraham asking an heir from God. He mourns his desolate state, and says that his steward, elate with children, expects that his sons shall be Abraham's heirs. God promises him heirs of his own:

> 'Behold heaven:
> Count its ornaments
> The stars of the sky
> Which now widely deal
> Their glorious beauty,
> Over the broad ocean
> Brightly shine:
> Such shall be the number
> Of thy strong children.'

Sarah, worn with sadness, gives her comely Egyptian maiden to her lord, and is rewarded by Hagar's insults and contempt. She upbraids Abraham, and the prudent man tells her to do what she likes with her own. The Bible story is very closely followed. Sarah was not

unlike some women who have lived in later days. She was hard and cruel, and her mind's hate spake fiercely against the damsel who fled away to the wilderness. When the angel, meeting the fugitive, questions her as to where she is hastening, she replies:

'Poor and lacking every wish
I fled from my dwelling,
From woe and my lady's hate,
From torment and wrong;
Now shall I with tearful face
Abide in the wilderness my doom:
Until from my heart
Hunger or the wolf
Shall soul and sorrow
At once have torn.'

The angel comforts her with the promise of Ishmael, a fierce and bloodthirsty son, a foe to the tribes of men; a promise more acceptable to a mother in the old English days, more acceptable to one who had been treated like Hagar, than to a mother of the present time. She returns home. The promise of a son by Sarah, his blonde haired wife, is again made to Abraham, but is received slightingly by both. The portion describing the visit of the angels is imperfect, but we read how the messengers bent their steps rapidly towards Sodom, the Son of Light Himself being their companion. This is worthy of remark, for up to this point there is no mention or hint of any person high in Heaven since

Satan's fall excepting the Deity Himself. He goes with them

> 'Until they on Sodom's steep-walled burgh
> Might look, might see its towering silver halls
> And red-gold palaces.'

The angels rest with Lot until, 'forth went the evening shine, and night came following after day, covering the streams, the seas, and the wide land with the darkness of this life.' Then follows a vivid description of the sinfulness and the destruction of Sodom and the surrounding land, and we hear how, as Abraham went alone in the early day, 'he saw fly widely up from the world the grim death-reek.'

I need not dwell upon Abraham's sojourn with Abimelech, but it is interesting to note that that great monarch is described as lying 'drunken with wine,' just as the Sodomites are spoken of as 'ale drunkards.' Abimelech is also called 'the dispenser of treasure,' 'the brandisher of the shield.' When we find that Gustave Doré, in interpreting Scripture to the English people to-day, paints Christ as descending from the Roman Prætorium, we are the more thankful that our old English poet drew his scenery from that which was best known to him and best understood by those to whom he sang. There is much to be said for bringing such matters home by following the example which the Master Himself set of

using the everyday language of the people spoken to; but it is not easy to justify the attempt to render a sublime scene more impressive by making it an impossibility.

There can be little doubt that our forefathers, in common with all other early European peoples, were hard drinkers upon occasion, and that the idea of the sinfulness of drunkenness is a modern one. Even in the Scriptures we read much more of its inexpediency, and *that* especially to those in high places, than of its intense wickedness. We see that then as now it made a wise man a fool, but it did not make him a brute; it made the heavy-hearted oblivious, but it was sloth, not drunkenness, that caused the weeds to grow in the garden. It is since men began to congregate in brick cattle-pens, and some to grow rich by the sale of liquid fire, and others to grow poor and mad by the unquenchable thirst such fire produces, that the insane and inhuman brutality which we have learned to associate with drunkenness has characterised it. Howell, in his merry Induction, argues that 'Good wine leadeth a man to Heaven.' If it be so we do not require even an historiographer to tell us where bad beer and worse gin will inevitably lead him to.

The Bible Story is continued—Isaac is born, and Sarah persuades her 'dear lord, ward of bracelets,' to send Hagar and Ishmael into exile. The manuscript

is again imperfect, and this part of the Paraphrase ends with the Offering of Isaac. It is curious that so striking a story, one which is so pathetically worked out in some of the old Miracle Plays, is told here in the most prosaic manner. There are one or two striking bits of scene-painting—Abraham wandering with the lad over the desert until, on the third day, in glory bright over the deep water the morn arose: their climbing up the steep downs until they stood on the roof of the high land—but beyond these all is very tame and dull, and it is not easy to believe that Cædmon had anything to do with it.

When speaking of Abraham and Sarah, I said that we find in this portion of the Paraphrase more allusions to female beauty and sexual love than is at all usual in this or in the other old English poems. We must not measure our forefathers by our standards in these matters. As I have already pointed out, that which we call love now-a-days was unknown to them—unknown probably to any of the ancient peoples. Our love is a joint product of Mahommedanism and Christianity. The high position which woman receives, the honour in which her chastity is held, the restraint, the respect, the gentleness of modern love, are to a great extent the results of the teaching of Christ; but the romance, the glamour, the dalliance sweet, the ideality of modern love, are the results of the Moorish

influence upon Provençal poetry, and come to us so. The lover amongst the Norsemen did not come 'with a ballad made e'en to his mistress' eyebrow,' but with the hair snatched from shrieking maids. It was with him as with the Red Indian: he was not worthy to marry until he had proved his manhood in the fight. Love was no pastime with him, it was a business, and one in which little time was lost. The hero did great deeds; he received the mead-cup from the maiden's hand, and union followed. Marriage was always honourable. The married woman was the ruler of the household, and the counsellor of her husband and his friends. There is of course only the purely selfish side of married life to be found. The woman lives but for and in and through her husband. His virtues, his pleasures, his wishes, are her subjects of constant contemplation, her joys, her only aims in life. The conception of her true position is a narrow and barbarous one to the emancipated minds of the present day, but there is a refinement, a purity, and an elevation about this old English view which contrasts favourably with those which we find prevalent amongst more southern peoples of the same period. No doubt there is about northern love, as about northern life, something grey, colourless, stern, and sad; but there is depth, intensity, and durability.

CHAPTER VI.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT.

The tale turns abruptly to the oppressed Israelites in Egypt, and, after a few lines descriptive of the excellence and wisdom of their great leader Moses, it speaks of the Death of the First-born. At midnight had the Slayer gone forth, and fiercely felled many sinful ones. The land mourned over the corpses of the dead; the flower of the nation had faded; the hands of the laughers were closed; wail was heard widely. Then the proud leader of the tribes hastened the march past fast and hostile towns, through narrow passes, an unknown way. The lands they traversed were covered with an air-helm, the moor held their tents. They pressed closely to the northern ways, for on the south they knew lay the scorched mountains of the Sun-men's Land, a people brown with the hot coals of heaven. God shielded them against the intense heat with a day-shield's shade; though men knew not the mast-ropes nor could see the sail-rod. He had spread a sail over the heavens, and all the people knew that the Lord of Hosts was with them. The bold in mind raised the

war trumps with voices loud; each evening the heavenly beacon shone; pale over the archers stood the clear beams; the shades prevailed, yet the heavenly candle rested over the hosts, lest horror of the waste, of the hoar heath with its stormy weather, should overwhelm their souls. Then the bright array shone, the shields glistened, the bucklered warriors saw their course straight before them, until suddenly in their onward way the sea-barriers withstood their force. Then they cast them wearily down; fear came upon the people; in deathly horror the homeless awaited the foe who had decreed him misery and torment:

'Then the men of Moses despaired when they saw
The host of Pharaoh coming forth from the south,
Moving over the holt in a glittering band.
They trimmed their weapons, advancing to war;
Their bucklers glistened, their trumpets sang,
Their standards thundered, they trod the people's bounds:
Around them the war-birds, greedy of battle,
Dewy-feathered, wan choosers of corpses,
Screamed as though over the bodies of God's folk:
The wolves sang foul even-song, hoping for food,—
Reckless and lean for the death of the brave ones,—
The army birds flew on the track of the foe.
At mid-night the watch-men cried,
The Spirit of Death hovered over them,
The people were hemmed in.'

The eager approach of the revengeful Egyptians, and the hopeless affliction of the fugitive Israelites, are

dwelt upon at considerable length. At dawn Moses bade his men gather the people together with brazen trumps; he divided the warriors into fifty bands, each of a thousand men, and each man famed for courage. He spake brave words to them, urging them to put their trust in the eternal God of Abraham, and telling them not to fear their foes, the space of whose fragile lives was at an end. Then he struck the sea, which divided on either hand, and he addressed the great multitude, pointing out God's goodness to them, and pressing them to pass over in haste. And then we read how tribe followed tribe proudly over the salt marsh: but just at this critical moment there comes a most extraordinary piece of prosing. The progress of the story is entirely stopped, whilst we are told, at tedious length, the whole history of Noah over again, and then have an abstract of Abraham's life: all in a very prosaic improbable style. This is either an artistic manœuvre or an interpolation. It may have been introduced just at this critical point in order to excite to a greater pitch the anxiety and eagerness of the poet's audience, but the style is so different from that of the preceding recital, that I have no doubt some well-meaning but stupid transcriber introduced it upon his own responsibility. It is not to be believed that a man who saw and pictured the rapid succession of great events so intensely as Cædmon did, should have stopped in the

very middle of the tale to tell for the second time, in a very inferior way, stories already well told, and without the least immediate bearing on the work in hand.

It is, indeed, probable that Cædmon composed from time to time the finer portions, the active parts, of the Paraphrase, and that these were strung together by his more prosaic brethren. Let us turn back for a moment, so that we may get the narrative unbroken. The Israelites had escaped from bondage but to find themselves, after a brief period of freedom, with the deep sea before them, and their cruel pursuers behind. Despite the Cloud of Safety by day, and the Fire of Hope by night, well might their souls be heavy within them. In battle lay their only chance of safety, and they fought against fearful odds. The fearless warriors of Egypt, the flower of her people, led by princes and nobles, moved towards them with hostile eyes; the king clasped his visor, the guardian of his people his grim helm; the banners beamed in hope of the fight; the hoary army-wolves hailed the battle, thirsty for the shock of war. The foe was determined and revengeful; the fugitives were hopeless, and sat clad in sad garments and with downcast faces. Then was the great deep opened, and Moses led them by a way which they knew not; the trembling host, the hoary chieftains, the fearless warriors, the sea vikings, marching in iron

companies, guided by him who was great and supreme in dignity.

The sea walls stood firm until Pharaoh and the flower of Egypt bravely followed the hosts of Israel, and then they burst bloodily under Moses' outstretched arm:—

'Then ocean wailed with death, crying was in the deep,
The Egyptians were turned back, trembling they fled,
The flood-dread seized on their affrighted souls:
The sea foamed gore, and a death-mist arose:
How gladly would that host now find their homes!
Their boast grew sadder, whilst, as a fell cloud,
Against them rose the rolling of the waves.
Where ways had been the flood in mountains raged;
With dying voices was the blue air thick;
The sea-walls, the proud ocean streams, arose,
The ever cold sea with its fierce salt waves—
And fettered fast the kingly might in death.
The Guardian of the flood, the foaming gulf,
With his old faulchion struck the unsheltering wave:
So, in the swoon of death, the army slept,
The flood-pale band sank with their sinful souls:
There came not any of that host to home.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTIVITY.

THE Paraphrase does not attempt to deal minutely with the history of the Israelites after they had entered the Land of Promise. It sketches briefly the period of their bright weal whilst they kept their fathers' covenant with the Lord of glory; their turning away to many errors; and their conquest and carrying into bondage by the wolf-hearted King Nebuchadnezzar with his wail-bearing host. It then relates the choice of three clever noble youths to speak wise words to the hard and high-minded prince. It tells of the dream which showed him in his wine-drunken sleep the end of the joys of earth, and of its interpretation by the truth-fast Daniel; and then it passes to the making, setting up, and worshipping of the golden image. The manuscript is somewhat defective, but we read how the faithful and noble youths boldly said that they recked nought of this idol, and how they could not be brought to worship it. The king grimly told them that they should yield, or suffer for their stubbornness; but they stood firm in the hour of fierce trial. The scene is

graphically described: the oven heated with a hugely great fire until the iron glowed through and through; many servants casting wood upon it; the wolf-heart king resolving to make a wall of hot iron round the dear youths; the hating men shoving them into the flames, which rolled out from the holy ones upon the heathen; whilst they themselves were blithe of mood, and the heat gave them, as they praised God, no more sorrow than the shining of the sun:—

> 'Them nothing harmed, but it was likest
> To when in summer the sun shineth
> And in the day the dew-drops
> Are scattered by the wind.'

This is one of the few instances in which we find a simile made use of in Old English poetry. The inchoate simile, the metaphor, is in constant requisition, but the full simile is very seldom introduced, although when it does occur it has considerable effect.

Of the 'Song of Azariah,' which follows, we have also a version in the interesting collection of Old English Poetry known as the Exeter Book, which formed a portion of the library given by Bishop Leofric to the church of Exeter in the earlier part of the eleventh century. It is more correct than the Bodleian version, and throws light upon many obscure passages. It contains also 'The Song of the Three Children,' and from the considerable difference between the

two versions of this Song we can readily appreciate the loss which we have sustained in having no copy of the Paraphrase of a much earlier date, before so many errors had crept into the text.

In both of these Songs the version now printed in the Apocrypha is closely followed, but it is much condensed. In the passage connecting them, which tells of the angel all bright sent from above to comfort the beloved ones and to save them, there occurs a double simile, suggested by the words of the original Scripture. 'But the Angel of the Lord came down into the oven, together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist, whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them.' Cædmon says:—

> 'Then, in the even, when the angel came,
> Windy and winsome was it, likest when
> In summer-tide the falling drops are sent,—
> Warm shower in the day-time from the clouds.
> Such as the weather's kindness was the help
> Through the Lord's might e'en in the fire to those
> The holy ones: the burning flame was quenched.'

In the Story of the Three Children occur the following lines, which are manifestly not taken from the Apocryphal version, but are a pious addition to complete the Song in an inconsistent Christian manner:

'We bless thee, Lord of all folk,
Father Almighty, true Son of the Creator,
Saviour of souls, Helper of heroes—
And thee Holy Ghost, we worship in glory
Wise (literally witty) Lord.'

The old writer was regardless of the fact that at this period of Old World History the doctrine of the Trinity had not been broached. He reminds us of many of the great old painters, who absolutely refused to be conditioned, but did their work in the way which most fully expressed their meaning, making all such small details as time and place suit their convenience.

The brief account which Daniel gives of the surprise with which the King Nebuchadnezzar saw the three Hebrews walking unharmed in the furnace, and discovered the presence of a fourth, is greatly expanded in the Paraphrase, and his wise and word-skilful minister is made to explain to him that they have been delivered from their peril, because they worship the one eternal God and Him alone. That which occupies five verses in the Scripture is spread over seventy-one full lines in the Paraphrase.

The story passes on to Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of the great tree, the refuge-place for fowls, which was to be hewn down, and Daniel's explanation of it:

'As the tree waxèd high to heaven
So thou to men art alone to all
Earth-dwellers, ward and guide;
To thee is no with-stander, man on earth,

Save the Creator alone, who cutteth thee off
From the kingdom, and friendless
Into wreck sendeth, and then turneth
Thine heart, that thou not carest
After men's dreams, nor knowest aught
But the wild beasts' thews, but thou living
For a long season with harts' leaps
Among holts must dwell. No meat is for thee
Save the moor's grass, nor rest given,
But thee the rain shower waketh and beateth,
As the wild beasts, until, after seven winters,
Thou shalt truly believe that one Creator
Over all men ruling and king
Is in the heavens.'

He counsels the King as in the Scripture, and the poet adds a short reflection on the way in which God often lets men run into sin. The story is continued until the comrade of beasts, the way-goer of the wilds, returns humbled and wise to be again the Chaldeans' King.

The first book of the Paraphrase ends with an account of Belshazzar's Feast; but the manuscript is imperfect, and the tale breaks off when Daniel has entered into the hall of feasting, and to the King and his kindred, flushed with wine, is boldly telling the dread meaning of the scarlet-book staves upon the wall.

Although the History of the Captivity, as told in the Paraphrase, is not without interest, and here and

there contains passages of some interest, it lacks the vigour and picturesqueness of the earlier portions, and I doubt whether we have Cædmon's work in it at all. The text of the Scripture is closely adhered to, and where it is expanded it is simply diluted. There are no longer vivid pictorial interpolations, fresh and powerful, showing clear poetic insight. The poet is the shaper, not the maker. He repeats in verse that which has been told to him in prose, but there is no sign that he has turned it over in his mind, and that he is the sëer as well as the hearer. The history of the manuscript prevents the attempt to prove verbal differences which point to this conclusion. It must necessarily be purely a matter of opinion, and I do not, therefore, wish to insist upon my view too strongly, but, taking a broad and comprehensive survey of the work as we have it, and contrasting the story of the captivity with that of Abraham or of the Exodus, the differences which I have pointed out seem to me to justify the conclusions I have come to.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND BOOK OF THE PARAPHRASE.

THE second book of the Paraphrase opens with a dark saying:

> 'That was un-darkened
> To the earth-dwellers
> That the Creator had
> Might and strength
> When he fastened
> The corners of the ground.'

Who the earth-dwellers were before there were sun or moon, stones or streams (for the creation of these is treated of immediately afterwards), it is hard to say. Probably the writer had heard some faint whisper of the curious legends respecting the beings who enjoyed the closest intimacy with the old world's fathers, the Liliths, and the like. But the work goes on briefly to mention the Creation, and then turns to the Fall of the Rebel Angels. It gives the speech accursed which Satan utters out of hell with icy voice, but it is a feeble echo of the fierce, proud words which he pours forth in the first book. The swart and sinful ghosts answer him

with bitter reproaches, and he replies in a second speech, in which he owns the justness of their attacks, and bewails his own sad fate. It is still the wail of a weak and broken spirit—a spirit far inferior, incomparably lower, in every respect, than the powerful, impenitent, wrathful fiend-god which Cædmon drew. It is impossible that these lines are his unless he had cast away his poetry to become theologian. When we come to Satan's third speech, part of which I have already given (p. 48), we get, indeed, to something better and higher, and which savours more of the old man's power. This third speech is in subject-matter so like to the second that I believe them to be simply different versions of the same, the second being much the later and poorer. There is a remarkable outburst of angry, but despairing sighs in the third speech, which is well worthy of notice. Immediately after the lines which I have given before follow these words:

> 'Then yet in speech the foul wretch out of hell
> Weary with woe still praised his many crimes,
> In words which flew like sparks from adder's tongue:
> O power of God! O covering of the good!
> O might of the Creator! O mid-earth!
> O light of day! O dream of God! O hosts
> Of Angels! O high Heaven! O I bereft
> Of all eternal joy!'

And then he muses upon the hardness of the punishment which has followed his attempt to drive the Ruler of

Hosts from his throne. He and his greedy followers turn back to the hot hell, whilst the writer takes occasion to enforce upon men the remembrance of the Holy Lord, and urges them to pray that when they hereafter seek another life they may find a land fairer than this earth, where beauteous and winsome fruits shine, and where the Saviour Lord Himself sitteth, white hosts of angels standing around his throne, praising him in words and works.

> 'Their beauty with the King of Glory shines
> Over the world of all worlds.'

And after all this the story goes back again to the rebel angels, and describes their bliss in Heaven before their revolt, and how Satan advised them to rebel, and how they were driven forth into the grim abyss, and how they wonder if the Eternal will ever allow them a home in Heaven's kingdom as erst he did. And upon this there is again a sermon upon the need of remembering the power of God, and banishing wicked thoughts, and upon the happiness in store for the blessed souls parted from sorrows. Yet once again the tale returns to the wretched state of the lost ones in Hell. It describes them wailing woefully through the windy hall; tells how they may not share the holy joys of heaven, but must have chill and fire in their dim home for their only hope. He who was twelve miles near to Hell

might hear the loud and woeful teeth-grinding of God's Deniers. And this portion ends with words of warning and exhortation almost identical with those which have been already repeated so often.

Surely this constant sermonising, this reiteration of the old story, this sad tale so repeatedly yet so dully told, point to the very confused state of the manuscript. Some fragments of it may have been suggested by the old words dictated by Cædmon himself, but this portion of the Paraphrase, as we have it, is a mere jumble of the unimaginative piety of many monkish writers.

But the tale now turns to that apocryphal portion of the History of Christ which is contained in the so-called 'Gospel of Nicodemus,' and which is so great a favourite with our old English poets and homilists, the Harrowing of Hell. The narrative is so mysterious and picturesque that it was certain to be popular. It is founded upon the verses in 1 Peter, c. iii., 18, 19, which say: 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust (that He might bring us to God), being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached to the Spirits in prison.'

The Paraphrase follows closely the version given in the Apocryphal Gospel. It begins by describing the dread of the lost angels when their Judge brake and bent the doors of Hell with the noise of thunder. They

moaned affrighted through the windy halls, for they anticipated the truth, that the souls they had held in bondage would be released, whilst they themselves must for ever afterwards continue to endure punishment for their work of wrath.

> 'This is strong-like: now this storm hath over-come
> Thane and vassals: the Lord of Angels
> A fairer light before him than we e'er before
> Saw with eyes save when with the angels
> We dwelt on high, cometh.'

For them there was no hope, but many thousands of their captives would be led to the heavenly country. The blessed race of Adam ascended, but Eve might not look on glory until she bitterly acknowledged her grievous fault, and prayed that she and her kindred might be released from the hot den. The manuscript is defective, but we learn how everyone, even in the horror of hell, rejoiced, in spite of their dreadful sufferings, as Adam—

> 'Raising his hands to the great King of Heaven
> Prayed him for pity for dear Mary's sake.
> "On mid-earth thou wast from my daughter born,
> And for men's help: now, Lord, let it be seen
> That thou thyself art the Eternal God,
> And Author of all Creatures."'

Then they were permitted to ascend to their heavenly home, but the Lord Eternal fastened bonds of torment

on the fiends and the poor wretch Satan, and thrust them further into deep darkness.

The 'Paraphrase' goes on to tell how the Firstborn of God explained to the released spirits the story of the Creation and the Fall, of His own life on earth, His Crucifixion, and His Intercession for them. Then it speaks of Christ's appearance to His followers in Galilee after His death, of His ascension, and His sitting in Heaven as judge, 'where we ourselves may sit with the Lord,

> 'Among the angels, having the same light.
> Let us strive ever that we him obey,
> And give him pleasure, then we shall have life
> Couther than we on earth could e'er enjoy.'

After this follows an account of Doomsday and a sketch of the dreadful fate which awaits the condemned, and of the joys of heaven. From the praises of the angel-spirits the tale turns to the Temptation in the Wilderness, and a vivid description of the Return of Satan to Hell after his great discomfiture. Christ had bidden him to measure the height and depth of his grim grave-house with his hands, and when he again stood in it he seemed a hundred thousand miles distant from Hell's door. The multitude of devils begin to curse him, but the manuscript is again very defective, and ends with the words

> 'Lo! thus be now in evil: thou wouldest not good before.'

It is abundantly evident that this second book of the 'Paraphrase' is not only in a very defective and mutilated condition, but that it is also so confused as to show unmistakably that it is a piece of patchwork. We may have some pieces of Cædmon's work in it, but it is impossible to say which they are.

I have thus, then, gone through the salient points of the entire 'Paraphrase.' It is a work full of imperfections, indeed, but of great interest. At times it attains to a high standard of poetical excellence, although, for the most part, it is barren and weary enough. I do not think that it is unfair to credit Cædmon with the best parts of it. He was, in the opinion of those who lived nearest to him, a man of mark—a man specially called to do a special work, and one who, in their opinion, did it well. We do not find in his work any high flights of fancy; we have but little reflection, and that of the simplest kind; but we certainly do find strong imagination; we certainly do hear a powerful voice. It is the voice of one speaking that which he has seen, not merely that which he has heard. It would scarcely be too much to say that, in the introduction and in the story of the Exodus, the vigour, the picturesque power, the living energy of his language have not been surpassed by those upon whom the mantle of the oldest English poet, the true father of English poetry, has fallen.

CHAPTER IX.

POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO CÆDMON.

THE one manuscript of Cædmon's 'Paraphrase' which we now have is very imperfect. It evidently contains much which he did not write, and probably does not contain much which he did write. Amongst the poems and fragments of poems which have come down to us from the old English days there are two which have been frequently attributed to Cædmon, one of which is supposed to have formed a portion of the 'Paraphrase,' and the other to have been an independent poem: and I propose now briefly to explain what these poems are.

The most perfect and most important of them is that known as the 'Dream of the Holy Rood.' This poem is so curiously connected with philological difficulties and research that I must tell its entire story.

Amongst the few remains of monuments which existed in this country before the Roman letters had been generally introduced, and which therefore bore inscriptions in the earlier symbols, the Rûns, of the country itself, the most perfect and important is undoubtedly the Ruthwell Cross, now standing in the Manse Garden, at Ruthwell, near Annan, in Dumfries-

shire. A full account of it, with a careful and well-executed drawing of the stone itself, showing all four sides, with the inscriptions, may be found in Professor George Stephens's 'Old Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England,' vol. 1, p. 405. It is now seventeen feet six inches in height, although it has been much knocked about and sadly defaced. Indeed, in 1642, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, conceiving it to be idolatrous, made an order for its destruction. It was thrown down, broken into several pieces, and its inscriptions partly obliterated; but the fragments continued to lie in the Church until, at the beginning of last century, they were removed to the churchyard to make way for modern improvements. Here they were being rapidly demolished when, in 1802, an enlightened incumbent took possession of them, and put them once more together where the Cross now stands.

The stone of which the Cross is made is a hard red grit, found in the district although not in the immediate vicinity. All the four sides are covered with sculpture, in a framing of Roman or Runic inscriptions. The Roman inscriptions which are on the back and front of the Cross surround figures of Christ, the Virgin, and certain of the apostles and saints of the early Church. The Runic inscriptions, which are on the sides proper of the Cross, are a framing to a bold

conventionalised vine-scroll, with the figures of birds and animals devouring the fruit.

So much for the Cross itself: but before I speak of the interpretation of its inscriptions I should explain briefly what runes are. They may, perhaps, be not improperly described as the indigenous alphabets or symbolical letter-systems which obtained everywhere in the North of Europe at all events, before the Roman alphabet obtained the sway. They are relics of the old life in England, Germany, and Scandinavia. 'Rûn' meant originally a secret; 'rûn-wita' a secret-witter, a secret-knower, hence a privy counsellor, the man who knows the secrets of the prince—as secretary is 'secret-haver'; 'rynan' meant to whisper, then to tell secrets, whence the expression 'to round it in the ear'—'rûna' meant a whisperer, one who dealt in runes, a magician: and truly in those old days, when reading and writing were practically unknown, runes must have been very effectual secrets indeed, save to a favoured few.

The earliest runes were cut or carved in wood or stone; they were afterwards engraved on rings, belts, swords, &c. 'Writan' meant to cut or carve, until writing, as we know it, was introduced with the advent of pens, ink, and parchment.

Runic letters vary in form in different lands. The English runes are not the same as those found in

Norway or Denmark, although they shew signs of a common origin, and, doubtless, all came from the East, the joy, and hope, and fountain of all life. Properly speaking, we should call runes 'futhorcs', not alphabets, the first symbols having the powers of the letters *f* *ŭ*, *ð* (th' hard), *ŏ*, *r*, and *c*. Now the Phœnician Hebrew alphabet, from which ours comes directly, was (as all writing at first was) pictorial, symbolical; 'Aleph' was an ox, 'Beth' a house, 'Gimel' a camel, 'Daleth' a door—and so the futhorc begins, 'Feoh' an ox, 'Ur' a bull, 'Thorn' a tree, 'Os' a door, and so forth.

We have seen that 'rûn' means a secret, and 'writan' means to cut: now let us carry this a few steps further. Runes were engraved, not on stone or metal only, but also on wood or on the bark of trees. Long after paper had been introduced we find that, when it ran short, beech-bark was a substitute; and as the Latin 'liber,' a book, means also bark, so the old English 'bóc,' book, means also the beech-tree. Again, 'poet' is a foreign word meaning originally a maker; the old English bard was called a 'scóp,' from 'scapan,' to shape or make; and thus, before pens, paper, or ink had appeared, before Christianity had begun to spread her blessings over our land, the scóp wrote rûns on bóc, the shaper wrote secrets on beech-bark, to be deciphered only by those who understood their meaning, as before then and since then, and even to-day, the poets have written the Secrets of God

and of Nature, God's Work, and of the Spirit of Man—His work too,—in books to be understood and interpreted aright by those alone who truly love them.

Now, as these runes were secrets, and as the power of using them involved learning, they fell of course into the hands of the only class who in semi-civilised countries possess learning, the priests—the men who mediate between their fellow-men and the unknown gods. They used runes for their own purposes, and chiefly to obtain more influence over the laity ; and thus runes became part and parcel of the miracles, auguries, and general paraphernalia which were made use of in the mysterious rites of religion, and aided to impress with awe and reverence a simple, superstitious, and credulous people. When, therefore, the change came, and the Christian monks replaced the priests of the older faith, the harmless symbols were ruthlessly destroyed wherever they were met with, although the ideas to which they gave form could not be blotted out. Indeed, the monks themselves were at times obliged to make use of them along with the orthodox symbols, as the inscriptions on the Ruthwell Cross and similar monuments abundantly prove.

To return to the Ruthwell Cross. Such a splendid relic had, of course, long been well known to antiquarians ; but it remained a puzzle, shirked by the most learned philosophers, until two bold and able Icelanders, Mr. Repp and Finn Magnusen, attempted to translate

its runic inscriptions. They both succeeded in deciphering the letters with tolerable accuracy, but when they came to fit them together they differed widely. Repp said that the cross recorded the grant of a font, called a Christ-bason, and of some cows and land in a place which never existed, and by the advice of monks whose monastery must have been in Spain. Finn Magnusen, on the other hand, made the cross the record of Ashlof's marriage settlements, explained who Ashlof was, her birth, parentage, and education, and ended by a hundred and five pages of (so-called) Anglo-Saxon history, which have been well described as a wild and extravagant dream. His translation of the inscription itself runs thus—

'I, Offa, Wodin's kinsman, transfer to Eska's descendant; to you two the property, field, meadow, give we Ashlof. The words of the noble I below make known. To Erinc young promised she riches, estates good; I for the marriage-feast prepare in the meantime. Received he now—the noble spoke—the gift, and aye preside in the hall over the guests. I have magnanimity—I bring rings. . . . . These three estates Erincred possesses—Christ was amongst. . . . . When to all we gave all that they owned—the married pair: At their home, the rich women's, you were a guest, their down dwelling. Give every . . . . the advice is willing. Back spoliation, if yet living on earth. Well, the Ætheling possesses now me this property. Saw I us my Son. Everywhere again rule.'

There is not much satisfaction to be got out of this. It reads like the mysterious advertisements in

the second column of the *Times* or the last column of the *Daily Telegraph*, blended here and there with a tip for the Derby.

But at length England's greatest philologer, J. M. Kemble, entered the lists. Satisfied with neither of the previous efforts at deciphering these defaced but deeply-interesting inscriptions, he examined them for himself, placed his own interpretation upon them, and (in the year 1840) in a masterly and exhaustive essay on 'Anglo-Saxon Runes' he gave the result of his labours to the Society of Antiquaries. He conceived that the inscription set forth four lines of a poem, and he wrote them down thus—

1st line. . . 'me. The powerful King, the Lord of Heaven I dare not hold. They reviled us two, both together. I stained with the pledge of crime. . . .

2nd line. . . 'prepared himself; he spake benignantly when he would go up upon the cross, courageously before men. .

3rd line. . . 'wounded with shafts. They laid him down, limb-weary. They stood by him. . . .

4th line. 'Christ was on the cross. Lo! Then with speed came from afar nobles to him in misery. I that all be (held) . . . I was with the cross.' . . .

Now here, at length, were the relics of what had evidently been a noble inscription. Finn Magnusen at once acknowledged its force, and that he had been wrong; but many persons, with the full sagacity of doubt, said that he who had pointed out the errors of

his predecessors might himself be in fault. The matter was not, however, to remain uncertain. In 1823, Dr. Friedrich Blume had discovered a manuscript volume of Old English Homilies with six poems at the end, in the old Conventual Library at Vercelli, near Milan. The English Record Commission had them copied, and printed them as an Appendix to their Report in 1836 or 1837. Kemble was at work upon them in 1842; and in examining one of the shorter poems, the 'Dream of the Holy Rood,' he was agreeably surprised to find that it contained all that had been recovered of the Ruthwell Cross inscription, together with much more which had perished. It was clearly shown that the lines on the Cross were an extract from a longer poem, and that he had frequently succeeded in getting the exact words of the original.

In this poem, the 'Dream of the Holy Rood,' the dreamer sees suddenly in mid-air a marvellous tree, which the Angel-hosts of endless beauty look on wistfully. It sparkles from the bright flashes of many gems, and rays and beams of light pass over it. Yet grim ones have gashed it through its golden surface, and red drops trickle down it. At length it speaks, and tells how, of yore, it was hewn down at the wood's end, and borne away upon men's shoulders, and fastened down upon an hill. Then it saw the Freer of Mankind eager to mount it—

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'Up-girded him then the young hero,
That was God Almighty,
Strong and steady of mood,
Stept he on the high gallows:
Fearless amongst many beholders
For he would save mankind.
Trembled I when that "beorn" climbed me,
But I durst not bow to earth.'

It must stand fast whilst dark-hued nails were driven through it, and it and its holy burden were basely mocked and handled. There it saw the Lord of Hosts hanging, whilst gloomy and swart clouds drifted over him, the shadow went forth wan under the welkin, and all Creation wept the fall of their King—

'Christ was on Rood—
Thither from afar
Men came hastening
To aid the noble one.
Everything I saw.
Sorely was I
With sorrows harrowed,
Yet humbly I inclined
To the hands of his servants
Striving much to aid them.'

When Christ is taken down from the cross it stands steaming with blood-drops—

'They laid him down limb-weary;
They stood at his lifeless head,
Gazing at Heaven's Lord,
And He there rests awhile
Weary after his mickle death-fight.'

Then the braves dig a mould-house for him, and set there the Sovran Victor, chanting sadly, that even-tide, their grave-lays; for they must drag them wearily away from their loving Captain, left in his lonesome and narrow chamber.

Soon battle-men dug down the Rood and hid it deep in a pit; but the Lord's friends found it, and drew it out, and decked it with gold and silver, and it was raised high in Heaven, to be the healer of those who bow before it.

The dreamer is then exhorted to tire not to tell of the Tree of Glory, where the Prince of Peace bore His passion for the many sins of man's children. He is reminded that the Lord who ascended to Heaven will revisit the earth in the Day of Doom; but is comforted by the assurance that no one need pale, panic-stricken, at the words which he then will speak if he but bear in his breast the blessed token of the Cross of Christ.

Then the dreamer in his humble homestead bowed blithely to the Tree of Triumph, and his worldly hopes and desires passed away, and—his friends rent from him—he gladly longed until the Cross-tree should call and fetch him from the coils of this care-world to the City of the Lamb. Then he prayed that He would be his friend—He who on earth underwent torture, yet gave joy to His angels and to His saints, His saved ones, when the Lord God Almighty gained his old home halls.

From this brief account of this interesting and beautiful poem it will be seen that it is of quite a different character to any portion of Cædmon's 'Paraphrase.' It is not merely highly imaginative, but it exhibits flights of fancy which are quite unknown to the Old English poet. Mr. Haigh attributes the inscription upon the cross to Cædmon, and this view is strongly supported by Professor Stephens. He even goes so far as to say that he has discovered (working not from the cross itself, but from an old plate of the top-stone, and from rubbings and casts of this portion which have been supplied to him) the words 'Cædmon me fawed,' which he interprets, 'Cædmon made me.' Even if this be the fact it scarcely proves that our Cædmon was the author of the lines carved upon the cross. . It rather points to the possibility that Cædmon was not an unknown name, and that some rich man of that name had the cross carved and raised at his expense, or that Cædmon was the name of the man who made the cross itself. As this top-stone is probably later in date than the rest of the cross, and as the workmanship of the cross then, as now, was likely to cause far more interest and wonder than its mere inscription, this seems to be the natural and proper inference. I do not wish to insist too strongly upon this. It is of course possible that we have in these four strong striking lines the relics of an

old poem by the Cædmon, which has served as the basis for the poem which the Vercelli Manuscript contains; but I do not think that the evidence upon the matter is by any means conclusive.

There was evidently quite a great outburst of English song in the centuries from the seventh to the eleventh. Much that was written has no doubt been lost, but we have not only the direct testimony of Bede that many men after Cædmon tried to make pious songs, but we have in the Vercelli Manuscript six poems of varying merit, differing in length from a hundred and ninety to three thousand four hundred and forty-four lines, and the Exeter Book contains many hymns and short poems, some of which are of considerable beauty. There is, indeed, abundant evidence that when English has once become an object of earnest and systematic study to Englishmen, we shall learn clearly that the first of the Western European lands to break forth into singing was our own England, and that singing was indeed a part and parcel of the English people, came with them from the old England of the Danish peninsula, and shows itself to us now in no slender love song, no doubtful babblings of rhyme, but in strong, manly alliterative verse, often no doubt bald and tame enough, always serious and somewhat tinged with sadness, but with a rough, fresh beauty and power which is all its own.

One of the most important of all of these poems is a fragment contained in the Beowulf Manuscript, and entitled 'Judith.' From its character, and from the manner in which it deals with the apocryphal history of that heroine, Professor Stephens has claimed it for Cædmon, and Dr. Grein prints it in its supposed place as an extract from the 'Paraphrase.' Although there are points not without difficulty, such as the direct reference to the three persons of the Trinity, which is probably an interpolation, I do not dispute the decision at which they have arrived. It is of course quite impossible to speak with any degree of certainty upon such a point, but there are frequent passages of clear-sighted vigorous description which recall the best portions of the 'Paraphrase.' Many of the poems to which I have alluded contain much mild reflection of the kind which belongs to the later portion of any poetical epoch; to the time when men have begun to think rather than to observe, to imitate seers rather than to see for themselves. In 'Judith,' as in the rest of the 'Paraphrase,' it is nearly all action. There is much repetition, considerable diffuseness, but every now and then a few strong stirring lines, showing that the poet had not only heard the tale, but had truly made it his own.

The manuscript is imperfect. It begins when Judith—'damsel elf-bright, skilful in thought'—has

already been four days in the camp of Holofernes. The Apocryphal version is closely followed, and the noble story is nobly told. We have one glimpse of Old English life in it, which is of great interest and value. Nearly the first of the remaining lines contain a vivid picture of the feast given by Holofernes to the 'bold armed warriors, his evil comrades,' on the day which was to be his last—

'Along the benches oft were deep bowls borne;
Often cups and bowls to the palace sitters.
They, brave shield warriors, dying, ate,
Although their dreadful lord dreamed not of it,
Then, in the guest hall, Holofernes,
The liberal friend of men, laughed aloud,
Shouted and made great noise, that men might hear
How the stern-minded one stormed and rejoiced,
Moody and mead-merry; often he urged
The bench-sitters that they should bear them well.
So he, deceitful one, through the whole day
His followers drenched with wine, until they lay
His nobles all, as over-drenched and dead,
Empty of every good—Thus bade this prince of men
To fill to the couch-sitters, until night
Drew near the sons of men.'

No doubt the poet had seen many a sight of this kind, when the leader of men confirmed their allegiance by taking away their minds. Times change, but not so much as we sometimes think. Would-be

leaders of men, in our own day, have won the hearts of their followers by somewhat similar proceedings, and commissions to inquire into corrupt practices have resulted. Now-a-days political death follows where physical death used to follow.

The description of the Jews issuing from the Holy City at dawn, recalls forcibly those descriptions in the earlier part of the 'Paraphrase,' which I have given at pp. 62 and 70—

> 'They bore the banners straight forth to the fight;
> The brave men under helms, from their holy burg.
> The shields dinned, loudly they hlummed (roared)—
> This rejoiced the lank wolf in the wold,
> And the wan raven, wail-greedy fowl,—
> Both from the desert,—that for them of men
> They thought to get their fill from the dying:
> And after them flew the eagle eager for food,
> Hoary feathered, sallow-bellied,
> Horn-nebbed.'

The tale of the glorious deliverer of her people is but little known in these days, but it was certain to awaken responsive echoes in the breast of our great Old English poet. This part of his work he has done right well.

If it be indeed Cædmon's, it is amongst the best portions of the 'Paraphrase'—if not his, it is well worthy of him.

CHAPTER X.

THE RISE OF MODERN VERNACULAR POETRY IN WESTERN EUROPE.

THE fact that England had a Vernacular Literature of considerable excellence at a time when all other European countries were intellectually in Cimmerian darkness, has often been dwelt upon with much patriotic fervour. I propose in this chapter to examine this matter, to glance at the growth of Vernacular Literature amongst the nations of Western Europe, and to inquire into the reasons for the peculiar position held by the English people in this respect. I shall deal chiefly with poetry in this examination, for the first endeavours of a nation to express itself in its own tongue are generally made in verse.

The great nations which sprang from the ruins of the mighty Roman empire were the slowest to develop Vernacular Literatures. This is readily accounted for. They had to form languages: they lacked letters: they were for centuries in a state of flux. The inroad of Teutonic peoples into France, Italy, and Spain; the conquest of the Peninsula by the Moors; the long

wars which attended these great events; and the unsettlement which followed them; were all inimical to literature. The breaking down of the old Roman tongue, and the springing up of several separate, but closely allied, languages; the destruction of learning save amongst a small though powerful class; the consequent want both of the materials for a vernacular literature, and of the power to use such materials had they existed;—made for these nations such a literature impossible. We must remember also that there was no desire upon the part of the small class who held knowledge in their hands to part with the possession which gave them their great power over the minds of the unlearned. So great was the reluctance of learned men to lose the privileges which their learning conferred upon them; so strong were the fetters imposed by priestcraft; so determined the opposition to letting all knowledge have free course; that, even in England, learned works were written almost exclusively in Latin until the middle of the seventeenth century, and it was not until nearly our own day that, in Germany, it was considered according to learned etiquette to use the mother tongue in works which were really of a serious character.

But I must go more closely into this matter, and must point out the beginnings of vernacular literature in those countries to which I have alluded, and it will

be seen that just in proportion as their lands were removed from the great and immediate influence of Rome, whilst still experiencing the benefits of her civilisation, did they develop literature in the tongues spoken by their peoples.

I shall speak first of the nations whose languages are allied to the Roman language, the classical or Romance speaking peoples. It must be borne in mind that there is always a difference between the literary and the spoken languages of every people. The literary language is ever somewhat archaic, and is more precise than the language of every-day use. This was peculiarly the case with Latin. As we know it in the writings of the great Latin authors it is not the spoken language of the Latin peoples, and it is to the spoken language, the popular tongue, that the so-called Romance languages are most closely allied. The great Teutonic immigrations affected this popular tongue to a considerable extent; they may be said to have completely broken it; but from its ruins were to arise the languages which are now spoken by all the classical peoples of Europe, languages in which there are constant traces of the Teutonic influence, but which are, nevertheless, the descendants of the old popular Latin, the *lingua rustica*. The Teutonic peoples, although conquerors, had to abandon their own tongue. They were much fewer in numbers than the peoples they

conquered; they found existing laws and institutions which they frequently adopted; they found learning to which they had to submit; they came under the powerful influence of the Church of Rome; and, from the very confusion of tongues which they themselves occasioned, they had to adopt Latin for their own laws. It may be laid down as a rule that the structural part of the classical languages is derived altogether from the Latin. Grammar, the life blood of a language, is only affected by foreign interference to a slight extent. The vocabulary of a language may be blended and altered to any extent, but the grammar may be simplified, may be reduced until there is little of it left, yet what is left will show clearly the source from which it sprung. The German language never became the ruling tongue in the south of Europe. Latin kept its supremacy for all civil and ecclesiastical purposes; its spoken dialect formed the base of the Romance languages: German feebly held its own even in France, where it had the greatest power, but for a few centuries, and it was everywhere extinct by the end of the ninth century; having, nevertheless, contributed a large number of words to all of the Romance vocabularies.

The purest of the Romance languages, and that most closely resembling the parent Latin, is the Italian. It was not employed for literary purposes until the twelfth century, and it was at the Court of Palermo

that the Italian muse was first heard. South Italy had been brought under the cultivating and civilizing influences of the Greeks, the Saracens, and the Normans, and had suffered little from the rude regenerating force of the Teutons. It was to be expected that literature should be first developed in this favoured portion of the peninsula, where the inhabitants were surrounded by the luxuriance of nature and the beneficence of climate which make the enjoyment of the outer world not simply possible but certain, and were interpenetrated by Greek devotion, by the beautiful Arabic fire of intellect, and by Norman energy and resolution. But in the thirteenth century there was a wide and general outburst of speech and song throughout the land. Tuscany became a great literary centre, and the Italian tongue, in the hands of Dante, attained that power, polish, and perfection which continue to characterize it at this day. He gave to it the first position amongst European languages, and stamped a permanent value upon vernacular literature.

When we turn to France, we find that the German immigration had much greater effect upon its language than upon that of Italy. It was not there merely an addition to a native language—it was a grafting upon an imported tongue. The original Celtic had been driven out by the speech of the Roman conquerors. Gaul was not merely conquered by the Romans; it was

colonized by them. But when Rome succumbed to peoples who preferred iron to gold, action to rest, health and strength to luxury, the Teutons took possession of the land. Tribe after tribe forced its way into the rich and desirable country; the Visigoths held Southern Gaul from the Loire to the Pyrenees; whilst the Franks, a confederation of several Teutonic clans, pushed through Belgium into Northern Gaul, and ultimately gave their name to the entire land. The Romans had given their *lingua rustica* to the Celtic inhabitants of Gaul, and there, as elsewhere, it became the language of the conquering Teutons. The French language was thus established with Latin for its base, and it is yet grammatically a Latin language and nothing else; but its inflexions were destroyed, its vocabulary was revolutionized, and its entire phonetic character was altered by the Teutonic influences to which I have referred.

These changes differed in degree in different parts of the land. In the North of France alone four distinct dialects were spoken up to the fourteenth century; and it was not until then that the dialect of the district known as the 'Ile de France' became the predominant language of France generally. But there was a strong line of demarcation between the dialects spoken to the north and south of the Loire; between the 'Langue d'Oil' and the 'Langue d'Oc.' We shall speak of the first as French, and of the second as Provençal.

The Langue d'Oc, the Provençal, had less of the Teutonic element than the Langue d'Oil. The South of France had been subjected to some of the same humanizing influences as the South of Italy. It had been the dwelling-place of Greek colonists, and the Moors had held it under their sway. The Provençal language attained its maturity and power in a sudden and unprecedented manner. It became at once the language of European courts; hundreds of poets who used it sprang into existence; and, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Southern France was the chosen home of song. The earliest specimens of Provençal literature are found in manuscripts of the eleventh century, and they probably belong to the preceding century, but they are of no value. The Troubadours, as the Provençal poets were called, flourished for two centuries, and then their reign was over and their language died away, excepting as a local dialect. Their poems were almost invariably light love-songs, often in the form of dialogues between the suppliant lover and his scornful mistress. They are gay and graceful, but lack strength and earnestness; they are passionate, and frequently gross and licentious; they have an unreal effect. It is a remarkable fact that, although probably there were more writers of Provençal poetry during those two centuries than there ever were in a similar period in any other land, they have not left a single masterpiece: they have vanished and made no sign.

The first work in the vernacular French language is a poem on the Martyrdom of St. Eulalia, in the ninth century; and there are two short poems, one on the Passion of Christ, and the other one the Life of St. Leger (Leodegarius), of Autun, which probably belong to the end of the tenth century, but they are written in a semi-Provençal dialect. From the beginning of the twelfth century the true existence of the French nation may be said to commence. German invasion or conquest is at an end, and to these centuries in all probability belong the legends and songs of which there are no existing proofs of so early a date. The Trouvères, as the true French bards were called, exercised an important influence upon English literature in the succeeding centuries, and to them we may trace the romances in which the early English abounds.

We need not linger over the vernacular literatures of Spain and Portugal. They are of a somewhat later date than those of Italy and France. The Peninsula had for six hundred years been subject to Rome, when it also had to submit to the conquerors of its conqueror. For three centuries did the Teutonic emigration into Spain go forward, and it had scarcely ended when the Moors made their appearance in the South and spread rapidly throughout the land. The potent influence exercised by the polished and brilliant followers of Mahommed upon the Provençal literature, and, through it, upon the literatures of Europe, has been already

glanced at. That influence was enormous upon Spain itself, but was not immediate. There the changes were too rapid and sudden, the unsettlement was too great, to permit of the development of a national literature. A people in bondage has something else than singing to think about. 'We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.' The famous epic of the 'Cid,' one of the most ancient poems in the Spanish language, is of not earlier date than the middle of the twelfth century.

But when we turn from the Romance to the Teutonic languages we find quite another condition of things. They were indeed mother tongues, more comparable in their nature to the old Latin itself than to the modern Romance languages. We find also that in the Teutonic lands there was less war during the centuries we are speaking of—the sixth to the twelfth, than in the Romance lands; less war, that is to say, upon a gigantic and revolutionizing scale. There was constant fighting going forward, but it was rather a succession of extensive family feuds, than a vain struggle for liberty and national life. This fighting was not the hopeless striving against foreign foes, which was the lot of the Romance nations; it was the stern pastime of a strong people, a people of vast super-abundant energy.

There is evidence that even in the fifth and sixth

centuries minstrels were to be found amongst the Teutonic tribes, singing of the deeds of prowess of their great warriors. Of their songs we have no remains, unless they are to be found in the Old English poem of 'Beowulf,' which I shall come to shortly. Charlemagne caused a collection of these old ballads to be made, and there is no doubt that they were the origin of the noble series of romances well-known as the 'Niebelungen Lied,' which date from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century. Prior to this time literature was chiefly in the hands of the monks, one of whom, in the ninth century, produced, in the old Saxon tongue, a Life of Christ, said to be of some merit, and known as the 'Heliand.' About the same time appeared a harmony of the Gospels, *Der Krist*, the work of the monk Otfried, and the oldest Teutonic work in rhyme. It was not until the twelfth century that the Teutonic wealth and power of song really showed itself, although the works already mentioned were truly national vernacular works.

But we cannot speak of the growth of modern vernacular poetry in Europe, especially in that portion of Europe which is emphatically Teutonic, without a passing allusion to the work of that enlightened man, enlightened in a time of outer darkness, Bishop Ulphilas. The earliest of the Teutonic dialects which

has been preserved to us is that in which he wrote, the Moeso-Gothic. It was the dialect spoken by the Gothic tribes which, in the fourth and fifth centuries, settled in Moesia, the modern Servia and Bulgaria, south of the Danube. They had embraced such Christianity as was then to be had, and were fortunate enough to have over them a man of mark. He was made Bishop about the year 360, and, being wise and daring above his fellows, he concluded that it was well that his people should understand that which they heard, and he translated for them the whole Bible, except the Book of Kings, into their own tongue. What that tongue was has long been a matter of dispute. It has frequently been called Moeso-Gothic, a term which is calculated to mislead, as Moesia had nothing to do with the language. It was simply the part of the continent in which the Goths at that time happened to be settled. As this translation of the Bible was used by other Gothic tribes, Max Müller calls its language Gothic, whilst Dr. Bosworth holds it to have been the pure German of the period in which it was written. There is nothing to justify the idea that there were fewer German dialects at that early date than there are now. The differences between Low German and High German were probably clearly marked, and we may therefore look upon this Bible of Ulphilas as the earliest specimen extant of a Teutonic tongue, that tongue being one of

the High German dialects. It is a noble monument to the wisdom and courage of Ulphilas, and is a store of treasures to the modern philologist.*

From the home of the Teuton, the true Dutchland, so great in area and so dense in population, we pass northward to Scandinavia, to the peninsula of Norway and Sweden, that bare, scantily peopled, but beautiful land, the birth-place of the Northmen who have exercised so great an influence upon the history of Europe, who have been for so many lands the little leaven which leaveneth the whole lump. Wherever they have gone they have put pith into the people, and freedom has triumphed in spite of every obstacle. For France they stemmed the tide of Turkish invasion; for Christendom they formed the flower of the Crusades; they wrested Sicily from the hands of the Saracen; they conquered Burgundy and England; they gave to the Netherlands the heart to bear up against the woes and pains of Spanish dominion; and to the men of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden, the strong and stubborn courage before which Austria quailed.

We cease to wonder at the success of these North men when we consider whence they sprang, and what manner of men they were. Even to-day, in the long and barren peninsula of Norway you have a land three times as big as England, and with one-third of the

* See Appendix F.

population of London. There the peculiar physical conditions produced a peculiar race of man. The land is bare, rocky, and sterile—beautiful to look upon in the few places which summer clothes with verdure, but, in its general aspect, cold, stern, and forbidding: it offers but small inducement to agricultural pursuits. Far up into this land the sea thrusts itself—the sea, teeming with food, lovingly bearing in its breast the plenty which the land denies. Brought up from earliest infancy to look upon her as no cruel foe, but rather as the true and constant friend of those who know how to woo and to win her favours, the sea is the playmate, the companion, the more than mistress of the Northman, and upon her he finds his true home. He is naturally a rover—all sea-loving people are—having slight inducement to stay on land, and strong inducement to leave it, he grows up upon the face of the great deep; he is a sea-king by right of birth. But his beloved sea is as treacherous as she is beautiful, and those who love her and live with her ever carry their lives in their hands. The habit of looking death in the face makes men strangely indifferent to it, and amongst simple and unlearned people, whose possessions are few and to whom luxury is unknown, there are many things more to be feared than death. The Northmen were emphatically fighters, as all men of courage and energy must ever be, whether they fight against

Saxons or sewers. To them, too, defeat and life were alone impossible. 'Better a death when work is done than life's most favoured birth;' and the lifeless warrior was laid upon the bosom of his favourite keel, and his war-weapons placed about him, and many a gift from those who had fought with him, and learned to honour him, laid by his side, and with a golden ensign, the symbol of true Victory, floating above his head, they let the sea which he had loved so well bear him lovingly away. Men who lived such lives as these Norsemen lived could not fail to be heroes, could not fail to be poets, could not fail to receive from the stern nature which surrounded them some insight into her mysteries. Their faith was indeed idolatrous, but it was full of grandeur, and instinct with wild and solemn beauty. It was intensely earthly and manly, and the new theories of the sanctity of sorrow, and the duty of forgiveness, were simply intolerable to the worshippers of the sun-god, Balder the beautiful, and of Hoder, the god of war.

And yet, can we not understand how it came to pass that these Norsemen, settled in Normandy, and, leaving their first love, became doughty champions of the Church; and that to them she owed many a triumph, not of peace; and that to them we owe those stone-poems, the Cathedrals of Winchester and Ely, of Rouen and Palermo?

When at length, in the 9th century, Harold Harfagr, Harold the fair-haired, obtained the supreme power in Norway, many of the independent nobles, too proud to be subjects, but too weak to resist, fled to Iceland, which had been discovered or re-discovered but a short time before, and carried with them their native tongue and, no doubt, their native songs. These songs are evidently of great age, and they are of the deepest interest. They seem to carry us back to periods prior even to the migration of the Scandinavians from their remote Asian home. They have a grandeur and a strength which is all their own. They have served as a mine of wealth for other peoples: the 'Niebelungen Lied' itself, if not in fact a more modern version of one part of the early 'Edda,' is its lawful child; and the good old nursery tales which delighted our infancy, and which true children and true men will always revel in, all have their origin from the same source. It was not until the eleventh century that Sämund Sigfusson Hinn Frode, Saemund the Wise, collected the poems forming the elder 'Edda' and committed them to writing. This is not the place to dwell upon the Eddas and Sagas in detail; but I must simply say that although there have been many earnest men at work upon them, there yet remains n them much to reward patient and zealous workers.

I trust that I have made it clear that I do not

claim for England the possession of songs, poems, and romances, in the people's tongue, at a time when all other nations were without them. I simply state that in England, first of all modern countries, we are able to speak with some degree of certainty of the author of a great poem, and that there was existing here a considerable literature in the people's tongue at a very early period. The actual dates of the earliest manuscripts in the vernacular of the lands I have mentioned may be summed up thus—

Southern Italian . .	11th century.
Northern Italian . .	12th „
Provençal	11th „
French (Northern) . .	9th „
Spanish	12th „
German	9th „
Norse	11th „
Cædmon	7th „

The earliest manuscript of the 'Paraphrase' is of the tenth century, but we have positive evidence in Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History,' and in King Alfred's translation of Bede, that it was written in the seventh century.

There was, indeed, a great literature in the people's tongue existing in this country before Britain became England, before the English conquered and colonised it. In Gaelic and Cymric alike there are numerous manuscripts dating from the eighth and ninth centuries,

and containing spirited war-songs and love-songs, and tales of high imaginative merit. Fergus, Oisin, and Caeilte, the earliest Gaelic bards whose names are preserved, are claimed for the third century; and Taliesin, Aneurin, and Myrddin, the greatest of the Cymric singers, for the sixth century. I do not speak of this Celtic verse except at second-hand, but it seems to have considerable historic interest, and to abound in fancy; to have more dash and gaiety, more bright colour, than the early English verse. We must not speak of Gaelic and Cymric as dead languages, although the day is apparently not far distant when to speak so would be correct. There is some thing peculiarly sad in the death of a tongue which has held its own for countless centuries gallantly and well; and it is perhaps not altogether a matter for congratulation that we should (in what we call a free country) make the speaking one's mother-tongue a punishable offence. I was told but recently by a Highlander, who has settled amongst the Southrons, that the severest thrashing he ever got at school was for inadvertently replying in Gaelic to a question asked by the dominie in English.

But little later in date than Cædmon's 'Paraphrase,' and possibly even earlier, is the grand Old English romance of 'Beowulf.' This poem, it has been contended, was probably brought by the English with them when they came from the main land, but it has

also been ably argued that it is a truly English poem in our sense of the word, and that the scene of the strange deeds which it relates is Hartlepool, in the county of Durham. In the earlier part of the poem the destruction by Beowulf of Grendel, a man-eating monster of the moor, is dwelt upon; and it has sometimes occurred to me that, for our Durham legend of 'the Lambton Worm,' we may be indebted to this Old English romance. Whatever be the fact about its true birthplace, it cannot be disputed that it is the oldest romantic poem in the language of any modern European people. We had thus in England, at a very early date indeed, certainly before the close of the eighth century, developed a literature of no mean kind, but containing two poems, one religious and the other romantic, which can still be read with pride and pleasure, and which afford us a deeply interesting glance into the minds and manners of our forefathers. It is not too much to say that they are alike worthy to be admitted into the long list of glorious poems to which our country's bards have given birth. They stand far back and alone, like two noble hills forming the portal to a goodly land.

To sum up the results of this chapter, I say that to our geographical position, to the diversity of natural riches with which our island is stored, to the admixture of Celt, Englishman, and Northman, of which its

people are composed, to its internal resources, to the many external influences to which it has been subjected, and to its happy sea-surroundings, do we owe it that we have been able to extend our empire far beyond the greatest dreams of the leading nations of antiquity; do we owe it that our tongue bids fair to become the language of the earth—that tongue which found its voice in Cædmon's 'Paraphrase,' and its noblest exponent in the acknowledged world-master, William Shakespere.

APPENDIX.

A.

'RADBOND, THE FRISIAN PRINCE.'

I have quoted Radbond's speech, because there can be little doubt that the Frisians (by which I mean the people who occupied the Frisian Islands and the Coast between Denmark and Holland) formed a considerable part of the Teutonic tribes which conquered Britain and made it England.

B.

STREONESHALH.

Bede translates Streoneshalh by Sinus Phari, the Bay of the Light-house. Streoneshalh is the true Old English name, Whitby being its Norse substitute. Many different meanings have been assigned to it, and it has been held literally to mean the hole or cave of the watch tower. There is a more probable interpretation still, which takes the first part of the word to be a proper name—the name of some well-known person of the district—in which case it is simply the hole or hall of Streone. There is no inherent difficulty in the watch-tower theory if we were quite sure that Streone really ever had the force of that expression.

C.

WHITBY ABBEY.

It must be borne in mind that all along the Coast of Northumbria the sea has been constantly and steadily encroaching upon the land. At Whitby itself, the soft sea cliffs have suffered within recent years from frequent land-slips, and the same process has no doubt been going on for the twelve centuries which divide us from Cædmon. If Abbess Hilda's monastery occupied the site of the present abbey, it must in her day have been very much further from the cliffs than it is at the present time. Even now the sea is only visible from the upper windows. In all probability the famous synod was held on the broad level grass plateau between the abbey and the ocean.

D.

CÆDMON.

Sir Francis Palgrave suggested that the name Cædmon was either assumed by the poet from the name of the Book of Genesis (so called from the first words in the Chaldee Paraphrase or Targum of Onkelos, b'Cadmin or b'Cadmon, meaning 'in the beginning'), or that the poet was a stranger from the East, and was called Cadmon, a Hebrew epithet meaning 'from the East.' He urged that the word has no strict value in Old English. This is scarcely correct—for (as Dr. Bouterwek and Professor Sandras point out) the word 'Ced' in Old English means 'a boat,' and I conclude that the poet was employed to ferry visitors to the monastery across the River Esk, and received his name from his employment. I must, how-

ever, point out that the word 'Cædmon' is only once used by Bede, and it is addressed to the poet by his angel visitor, who tells him to sing of the beginning of created things. This fact gives, of course, more weight to Sir Francis Palgrave's Biblical theory; and, indeed, either origin of the name will do very well indeed, if we agree that the poet was so called, and do not adopt the preposterous notion of his being an Eastern wanderer. The names Cadmon and Sedmon (a corruption of Cadmon) are still to be found upon the coast of Yorkshire, and, I believe, at Whitby itself.

E.

MILTON AND CÆDMON.

It is certain that Milton, when writing his 'History of England,' made much use of Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History,' and he must have known the account which Bede gives of 'Cædmon.' His 'History of England' was not published until the year 1670, but he was at work upon it in 1647 and 1648. His friend Junius printed the 'Paraphrase' in 1655. 'Paradise Lost' was begun in 1658, and was sold to the publisher in 1667. It is certainly highly probable that Milton would inquire carefully into the treatment by the older poet of the very subject to which he was about to devote all the energies of his mighty mind.

F.

ULPHILAS'S BIBLE.

It is to Junius that we owe the discovery of this precious manuscript. He published it at Dordrecht in 1665, and it is now the chief treasure of the Royal Library at Upsala.

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